

ELVIRA DYANGANI OSE, NEW DIRECTOR OF MACBA

Elvira Dyangani Ose (Córdoba, 1974) will be the first woman to hold the position of Director of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. She is currently Director and Chief Curator of The Showroom in London, as well as Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, and a member of the Thought Council, Fondazione Prada. She has previously been Curator of the Göteborg International Biennial of Contemporary Art; Curator of International Art at Tate Modern, London; Artistic Director of Rencontres Picha - Lubumbashi Biennial, Democratic Republic of the Congo; Curator of Contemporary Art at the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC), Seville; Senior Curator at Creative Time in New York; and Curator of Contemporary Art at the Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno (CAAM) in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria.

The General Council of the Consortium of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona endorsed the proposal of the committee of experts, which especially valued Elvira Dyangani Ose's desire to provide **'an innovative approach to the role of the Museum on the local and international stage, while incorporating a clear desire to connect with contemporary debates on the role of art at the beginning of this century, without shying away from a firm commitment to the social issues surrounding cultural institutions'**.



Photo by Maureen Evans

The jury was made up of representatives of the institutions and members with a recognized career in the international and local artistic sector: Joan Subirats, Deputy Mayor for Culture of Barcelona City Council; Elsa Ibar, Director General of Cultural Heritage of the Generalitat de Catalunya; Ainhoa Grandes, president of the Fundació MACBA; María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco Carrillo de Albornoz, Director General of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Culture; Chris Dercon, president of the Association of French National Museums, Grand Palais, Paris, and member of the MACBA Advisory Committee; João Fernandes, artistic director of the Instituto Moreira

Salles in Rio de Janeiro; Ann-Sofi Noring, chief curator of the Moderna Museet, Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Swedish Academy of Fine Arts and chair of the Swedish Arts Grants Committee, and a representative of the museum's employees.



She was accompanied in her presentation to the media by:

Excma. Sra. Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona and President of the Consortium

Hon. Sra. Natàlia Garriga, Culture Councillor of the Generalitat de Catalunya and 1st Vice-President of the Consortium

Sra. Ainhoa Grandes, President of the Fundació MACBA and 3rd Vice-President of the Consortium

Elvira Dyangani Ose will take up her position in the Museum in September and will combine her work at the helm of the new MACBA with the final commitments to her current job as Director and Chief Curator of The Showroom. The arrival of the new director of MACBA coincides with an important stage in MACBA's history, with a programme of expansion underway by the Catalan-Swiss team of HARquitectes and Christ & Gantenbein that will consolidate MACBA as an integrative museum and also as a public meeting point. This project will help to strengthen its aim of strongly representing Barcelona's contemporary art scene, placing it solidly in an international context, while strengthening its vocation as a public museum that is a habitat, diverse, inclusive, close, accessible and transcendent.

Elvira Dyangani Ose has stated that, for her, being appointed Director of MACBA means 'that institutions such as museums – and, in this case, MACBA – are or should be permeable to the world around them. That they recognise hyperlocality, in this case the Raval and its communities, as a starting point. That they span a more local scale to a transnational one, in a

journey that emphasises the de-hierarchisation of history, in favour of the plurality of stories, narrators and protagonists.’ Elvira Dyangani Ose’s proposal for MACBA ‘takes as its time frame and source of origin the conceptualisation of MACBA within a cultural context that makes this formulation possible. Within the active nature of the artistic and cultural scene of Barcelona and Catalonia in the mid-seventies and eighties, which defined a vernacular environment without which institutions such as MACBA would not have been possible.’ It leaves behind the agreement known as the Cultural Pact, which established the conditions under which the authorities of regional and local governments signed an agreement with members of civil society to develop new cultural policies beyond the political spectrum that would lead to the constitution of a museum of contemporary art. And it traces the origin to a whole generation of artists — visual and from other disciplines —, to local groups, to radical pedagogues and collectors who believed in a new format, to the ‘institutional’ prior to the institution. This new perspective, as a base for the Museum, has as its key dates the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc in 1991, the declaration of the War on Terror in 2001, and the current neoliberal paradigm in which we are immersed. Dyangani Ose states that MACBA’s interest in ‘post-war international art forms and discourses will continue to be the subject of possible large-scale collective and individual exhibitions, public programmes and research projects. ‘The chronology I present proposes a new geographical and conceptual approach that will constitute a set of research premises to formulate a series of transdisciplinary, transgenerational initiatives, from a hyperlocalised and distant environment. More significantly, it will force the Museum to examine and overcome its own history from a different point of view, avoiding its current self-reflective mode: questioning the narratives that the Collection sought to establish 25 years ago and evaluating its successes and failures; formulating a new scope for its collections in a strategic plan with a museographic and pedagogical agenda; reviewing its capacity to create new audiences, as well as imagining new ways to reach and maintain them in the long term; and creating a sense of being a distinguished agency formulated by situated knowledge through the different potential actants and communities of diverse origin and ancestry, who contribute, support and enrich MACBA, at neighbourhood, urban, regional, national and international level.’

Finally, she acknowledged the countless manifestations of support she has received from all walks of life and expressed her desire ‘for Plaça del Àngels to enter the Museum and for MACBA to become the *museum of affections*, which recognises its users – neighbours, spectators, skateboarders, tourists, communities and even casual passers-by – as its *raison d’être*, as the core of a network of concentric circles around which all the activities, mission and future of the Museum revolve.