

# SEISMOGRAPHY OF STRUGGLES



TOWARDS A GLOBAL HISTORY  
OF CRITICAL AND CULTURAL JOURNALS

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Our aims, which are difficult to define in words, are clear for anyone who reads *Community* regularly and with generosity. We will not pursue our readers, imposing “isms” and “anti-isms” on them, nor will we take advantage of them by exploiting their fears, biases and weaknesses. Any point of view on any subject will be welcome, as long as it is well-informed and well-written. We can state that *Community* will defend the right to free speech and the means to access it, as something that belongs inviolably to everyone.

*Community*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1954, p. 1

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de l'art



This project is the result of a research program directed by Zahia Rahmani at the National Institute for Art History, Paris.

For over two centuries, print media has been a space that has accommodated varied experiences. Often born out of a sense of urgency in response to colonialism, many journals have aligned with critical, political, aesthetic, poetic and literary ambitions, as well as sustaining graphical and scriptural creativity. Despite being a fragile object, the journal has regularly appeared in the struggles that women and men have waged for emancipation. In pursuit of political objectives to support human communities and their aspirations, motivated by noble causes and driven by the determination of committed authors, journals often pulled together difficult material. And their unique formal features reveal a rare aesthetic power. In this all-digital era, we must re-establish and reassess journals' formal, aesthetic and political functions on a global scale.

*Seismography of Struggles* is an inventory of non-Western critical and cultural journals, including those from the African, Indian, Caribbean, Asian and South American diasporas, produced in the wake of the revolutionary movements of the late eighteenth century up to the watershed year of 1989. The video-and-sound work presented here reflects upon experiences of enslavement, apartheid and genocide, as well as responses to violent dictatorships, brutal political turmoil and sociopolitical convulsions.

Colonialism impacted the cultural and social cohesion of a number of communities, which fought against the machinery of colonialism by constantly renewing their modes and means of political action. It included critical and cultural journals, many of which have the struggle for emancipation at their root.

In the eighteenth century, despite the subsequent example of the Haitian Revolution, the War of Independence in what was to become the United States failed to put an end to slavery, while the dispossession of Native American land continued long after the American Civil War (1861–1865). The abolitionist drive principally came about through Maronage, a method of resistance and resettlement by African Americans, especially by former slaves. This began as early as the sixteenth century, first in Africa, spreading to the Mascarene Islands, then to the Americas and the West Indies, through clandestine political and artistic practices –reinventing a tradition of song, poetry, and dance that continues to this day– and, later, through narratives and texts. Very few materials from that era have survived and the rare few that exist are hard to access. Yet, it is in them that a model of critical resistance was born and realised in various media, including cloth, wood, paper and a variety of signs and drawings. Meanwhile, in Europe the samizdat involved the clandestine copying and distribution of literature banned by the state, especially in the former communist countries of eastern Europe. Samizdat was also produced underground by Jews to fight against oppression. All these precarious practices have withered over time.

These journals have constantly affirmed a thwarted ambition for independence, and as a whole they are made up of singular voices from bold authors who are drawn to renewed political and cultural prospects.

The oldest material evidence of this eminently modern exercise is *L'Abeille haytienne*, a critical journal that was founded on the island of Haiti in 1817. The journal expresses the constant desire for emancipation. Christopher Columbus landed in Haiti in December 1492 and named it Hispaniola. The island later became a French territory and was renamed Dominica and, over time, more than 400,000 enslaved people lived there and were subjected to France's ferocious rule. Radical thinker and writer C.L.R. James noted that in 1789, the year of the Haitian Revolution, the first human struggle for emancipation from colonial rule in the modern era, Haiti alone accounted for more than two thirds of French foreign trade. Finally, the second revolt in 1804 gave rise to Haiti as a nation state. Even though this cause was won, the struggles continued.

*Seismography of Struggles: Towards a Global History of Critical and Cultural Journals* is the outcome of a long-term research process undertaken at the French National Institute of Art History (INHA) as part of the “Globalized Art History” research area, which launched “Globalization, Art and Prospective – GAP” in 2015, thus enabling the completion of an inventory project and the exploration of non-European cultural periodicals on a global scale. The *Seismography of Struggles* exhibition is the result of this research. A database dedicated to these journals is freely accessible online.\*

This project is the result of a collective, multilingual and decentralised research effort that was conducted at the INHA. It demonstrates the relevance of a global history of art and allows us to reassess, and above all to demonstrate, the intellectual, artistic and political dynamics that were exercised at the heart of colonial empires.

Formulated as a video-and-sound installation, it consists of two films made up of montages of images from critical and cultural journals produced on different continents, a third of which is composed of a collection of translated manifestos, and is accompanied by an original musical composition by Jean-Jacques Palix.

It is within constrained and divided spaces that the journal as we know it appeared: as a space for political and artistic expression seeking autonomy. In this sense, due to the global reach of modern colonialism, one could argue that the critical and cultural journal, often born out of urgency and necessity, is through its hybridism, its mobility and its precarious existence, a pure object of colonial experience and therefore, by nature, a laboratory of modernity.

In this montage of images, sounds, covers, texts and portraits of founders, language and discourse shape a long continuum of graphic interventions, including over 800 documents. The women and men behind the literary, poetic, visual and political texts they contain, among them leading intellectuals, militants, activists, writers and artists, have made their mark on their own era and beyond.

Voices of renewed political and cultural prospects are highlighted, such as those of Zitkala-Sa, Carlos Montezuma, Ramananda Chatterjee, Hiratsuka Raichō, W.E.B. Dubois, Huda Sha'arawi, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Marcus Garvey, Lu Xun, Rabindranath Tagore, Paulette Nardal, Chen Duxiu, Oswald de Andrade, Vicente Huidobro, Gabriel García Márquez, Marta Traba, René Ménil, Aimé Césaire, Annette Mbaye d'Erneville, Zakya Daoud, Abdellatif Laâbi and Wole Soyinka, among others.

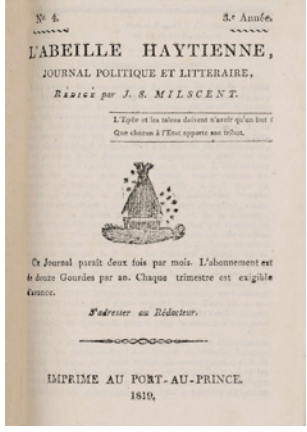
The chronological narrative highlights common experiences in different parts of the world, as well as many other territorial conjunctions, often marked by similar political situations, sometimes very far removed from the European world and its conflicts. *Seismography of Struggles* helps us to understand world history from a different perspective. Its chronology highlights the fact that the actions against Western colonial models were not carried out in the margins or the periphery as has been said, but through other territorial conjunctions, often framed by moments of similar political entanglement, even if sometimes very far removed from one and other.

\* More information at *Global Journals Portal*  
sismo.inha.fr



# SEISMOGRAPHY OF STRUGGLES

1819 (1817–1820)



1861



1893 (1893–1895)



1900



(1901–1964)



1901 (1900–1909)



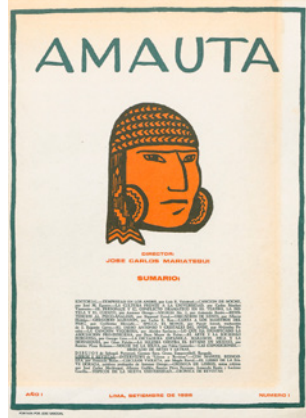
1922 (1922–1923)



1925 (1923–1949)



1926 (1926–1930)



1926 (1926–1941)



1926



1926



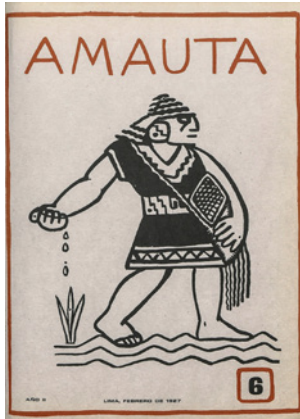
(1927–1930)



1927 (1924–1936)



1927 (1926–1930)



1932



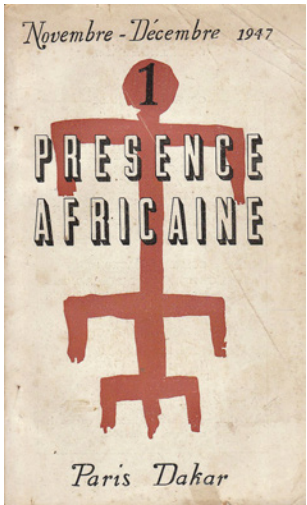
1933



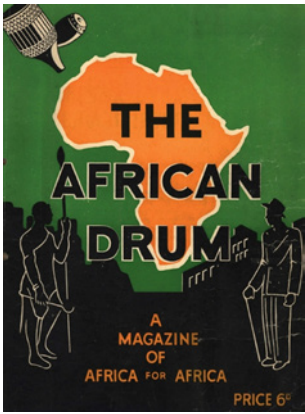
1945 (1942–1977)



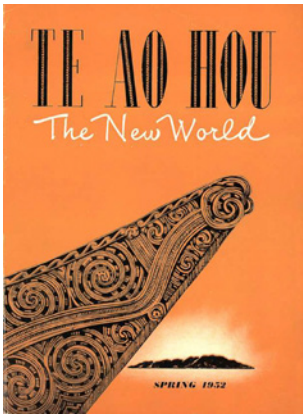
1947 (1947–?)



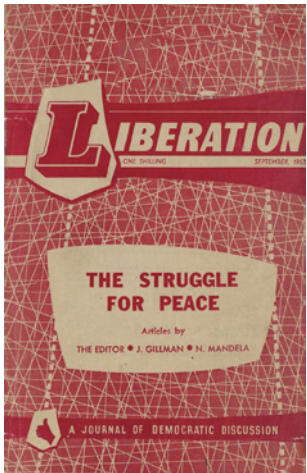
1951



1952 (1952–1976)



1953 (1953–1959)



1955 (1951–?)



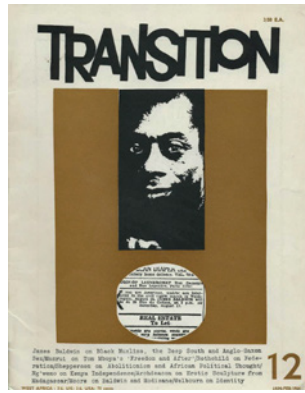
1961 (1961–?)



1963



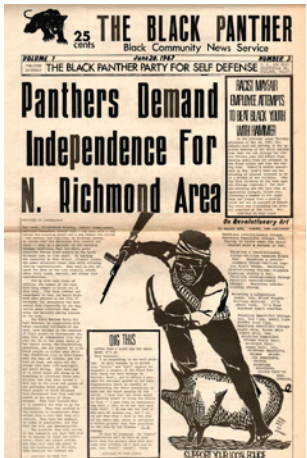
1964 (1961–?)



1967



1967 (1967–1980)



1967



1967 (1963–1975)



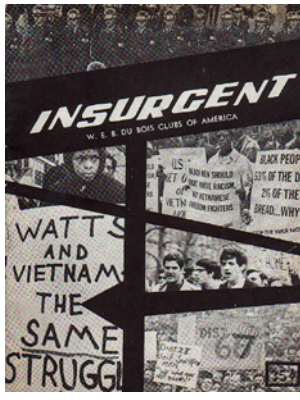
1968 (1951–?)



1968 (1960–currently)



1968 (1965–1968)



1968 (1966–1994)



1968 (1967–1990)



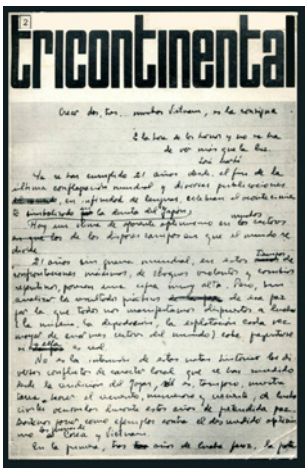
1969 (1967–1980)



1969 (1967–1992)



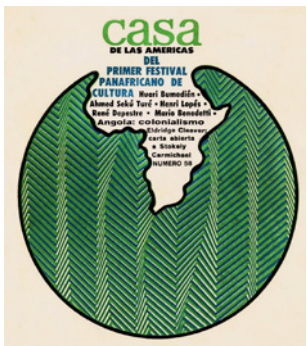
1969 (1967–1992)



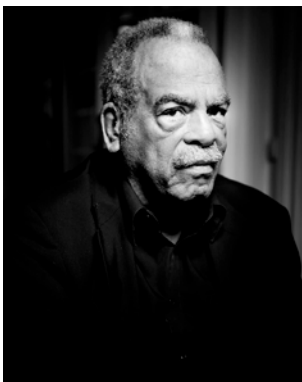
1970 (1967–1970)



1970 (1960–currently)



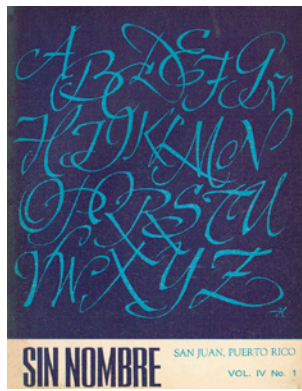
1971



1971 (1961–?)



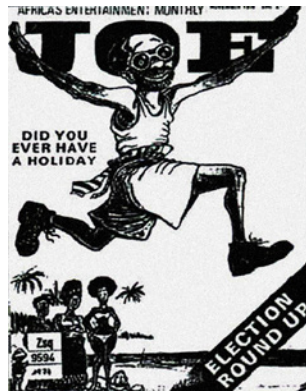
1973 (1970–1984)



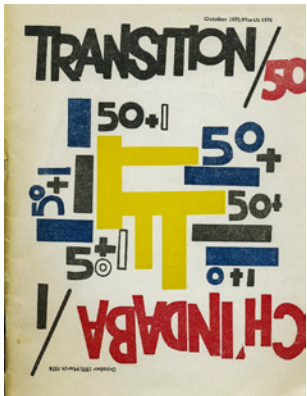
1974



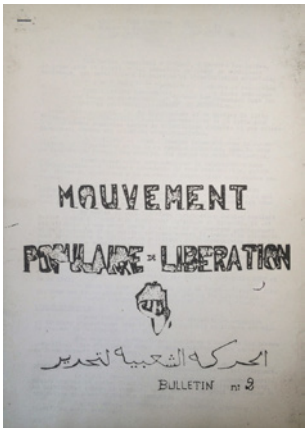
1974 (1973–1979)



1976 (1961–?)



1976 (1976–?)



1977 (1977–1988)



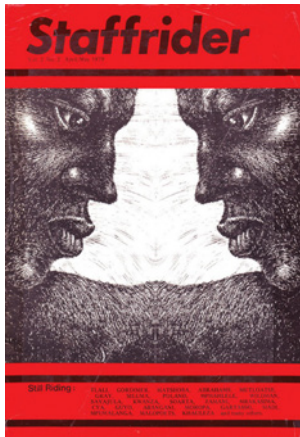
1978 (1978–1989)



1979 (1979–1980)



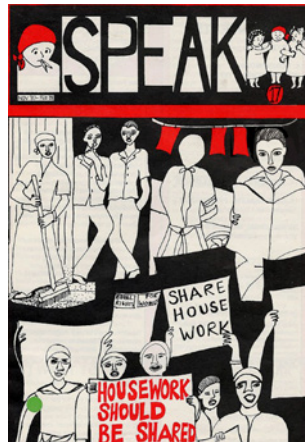
1979 (1978–1993)



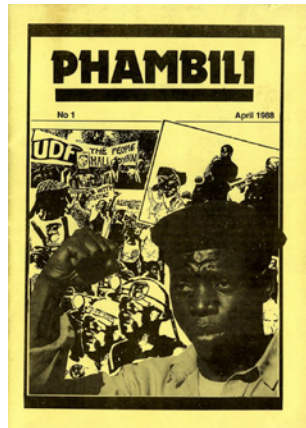
1985 (1983–1985)



1987 (1982–1994)



1988 (1988–1989)



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An exhibition at the MACBA Documentation Centre,  
directed by Zahia Rahmani within the framework  
of the *Possible Archives* project.

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