

The Museum of Modern Art

***ARCHITECTS OF LIBERATION: MODERNISM IN WESTERN AFRICA* TO OPEN AT MoMA ON JULY 5, 2026**

The Exhibition Will Be the First to Examine the Relationship Between Modern Architecture and Agendas of Self-Determination During the Independence Era in Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo

NEW YORK, February 5, 2026— The Museum of Modern Art will present *Architects of Liberation: Modernism in Western Africa*, the first major exhibition to examine modern architecture from the late 1950s through the early 1980s in the context of political independence in the region. On view from July 5, 2026, through January 2, 2027, in the The Robert B. Menschel Galleries on the Museum's third floor, the exhibition will highlight the independence period as a prolific time of architectural production, during which leaders of newly founded African nations sought to redefine themselves and their countries in contrast to colonial rule. This new architectural identity engaged deeply with broader political ideas of Pan-Africanism and Africanization, which were promoted by new leaders and governments. Spanning seven countries—Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo—the show will be organized around anchor projects that serve as entry points into categories such as cityscapes, education, and housing. The exhibition will pay particular attention to the critical contributions of the first generation of trained African architects. *Architects of Liberation* is organized by Martino Stierli, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, and Ikem Stanley Okoye, guest curator and associate professor at the University of Delaware; with Mallory Cohen, curatorial associate in the Department of Architecture and Design.

Architects of Liberation will feature approximately 450 objects, including architectural drawings, models, and archival photographs, from the collections of over 50 lenders from 17 countries. The exhibition is the result of four years of extensive research in the region. The vast majority of the objects that will be on display have never been presented publicly, and most of the architects included have never previously been featured in any exhibition or scholarly publication. The exhibition will also include original and commissioned architectural models, as well as a suite of new films and commissioned photographs.

"I am thrilled to present *Architects of Liberation* to our audiences after an intense multi-year research period," said Martino Stierli, The Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design. "Our exhibition will shed light on a crucial, under-examined period of African history at mid-century, providing a new perspective on the continent. The stunning works of architecture produced during the independence period are testaments to an extraordinary moment of design innovation and optimism."

Following the African independence movements that culminated in the “Year of Africa” in 1960—when 17 countries across the continent gained political independence from their colonial rulers—newly established nation-states faced key questions that went hand-in-hand with a new cultural awakening in art, music, dance, and literature. The exhibition applies the term “western Africa” loosely to designate the broad coastal region spanning from Senegal to the eastern reaches of the Gulf of Guinea. By shedding light on the shared issues and concerns in each of these countries, *Architects of Liberation* articulates an architectural language of self-determination that sought to adapt, adopt, or reinvent the idiom of modernism for specific cultural, political, and economic purposes and to particular climatic conditions.

Key works that will be featured include:

- **Africa Pavilion, Accra Trade Fair (Ghana)**
A circular pavilion symbolizing Ghanaian unity designed by Victor (Vic Adegbite, Jacek Chyrosz, and Stanisław Rymaszewski), with the project led by the Ghana National Construction Corporation (GNCC) between 1962 and 1967
- **The Pyramide (Côte d’Ivoire)**
An iconic high-rise designed by Rinaldo Olivieri, completed in 1973, that reimaged the skyline of Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire’s largest city
- **CICES (Senegal)**
A trade-fair campus designed by French architects Jean-François Lamoureux and Jean Louis Marin. CICES is emblematic of Senegalese President Léopold Senghor’s “asymmetrical parallelism,” which introduced diverse, non-repeating elements to create dynamic harmonies.
- **Gare de Bessengue (Cameroon)**
A train station designed by Jacques Nsangue Akwa and Emilien Douala Bell
- **University of Ife (Nigeria)**
An ambitious educational project with a master plan by Arie Sharon

The exhibition will highlight a diverse group of practitioners, including Jean Léon (Côte d’Ivoire), Cheikh Ngom (Senegal), Demas Nwoko (Nigeria), John Owusu Addo (Ghana), and Vic Adegbite (Ghana). Architects included from outside the African continent include Zoran Bojović (Yugoslavia), Rinaldo Olivieri (Italy), and Henri Chomette (France).

Full list of architects and artists featured in *Architects of Liberation*

John Owusu Addo, Victor (Vic) Adegbite, Raymond Aka Adjo, Jacques Nsangue Akwa, John Andrews, David Aradeon, Kader Attia, Babacar Bâ, James Barnor, Seydou Barry, Willis E. Bell, Zoran Bojović, Fernand Bonamy, J. Max Bond Jr., Robert Boy, Olivier-Clément Cacoub, Daniel Chenut, Henri Chomette, Jacek Chyrosz, Niksa Ciko, James Cubitt, Alpha Walid Diallo, Constantinos A. Doxiadis, Emilien Douala Bell, Jane Drew, Michel Ducharme, Guy Durand, Michel Ecochard, Augustine Akhuemokhan Egbor, Ousmane Faye, Yona Friedman, Edwin Maxwell Fry, R. Buckminster Fuller, François-Xavier Gbré, John Godwin, Heinz Fenchel, Messan Raphaël Ekoué-Hagbonon, Konrad Helbig, Nick Hollo, Gillian Hopwood, Aylette Jenness, Paul Kodjo, Stefan Kolchev, Jean-François Lamoureux, Christian Larras, Jean Léon, Ousseynou Ly, John Seyton Kole MacGregor, Miro Marasović, Jean Louis Marin, Philippe Ménard, Jean-Pierre Minost, Mordechai Moneh, Riccardo Morandi, Pier Luigi Nervi, Marilyn Nance, Cheikh Ngom, Bernard Nivet, Demas Nwoko, Marcello D’Olivo, Elpidio Olympio, Rinaldo Olivieri, Claude Parent, Charles Polónyi, Henry Pottier, Stanisław Rymaszewski, Armand Salomon, Kenneth Scott, Arie Sharon, Hannah Shreckenbach, Thomas A. Todd, Alan Vaughan-Richards, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Gerhard Vetter, Carrie Mae Weems, Harry Weese

PUBLICATION:

The exhibition will be accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue edited by Stierli and Okoye, with Cohen. The publication will feature a newly commissioned photographic portfolio by François-Xavier Gbré, and contributions by Adekunle Adeyemo, Guillermo S. Arsuaga, Sabine Bako, Antawan I. Byrd, Brunno Douat, Johan Lagae, Sonia Lawson, Ayala Levin, Prita Meier, Monika Motylińska, Marcos García Mouronte, Studio NEiDA, Łukasz Stanek, Y. L. Lucy Wang. 224 pages, 175 color illustrations. Hardcover, \$75. ISBN: 978-1-63345-185-8. Published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and available at MoMA stores and online at store.moma.org. Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada, and through Thames & Hudson in the rest of the world.

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