

# New Media Art and Technology in Africa – Part I

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## Introduction

Immersive installations, multi-sensory, and interactive art experiences are all an integral part of Africa's dynamic contemporary art scene. In a globalised and hyper-connected art world, **a new generation of artists are using technology to create and disseminate their work.** Despite the existing and growing body of **video, film, multi-media installations** and **digital artworks** by artists from **Africa**, and its **diaspora**, there are few studies that have focused on new media scenes in and across Africa, specifically.

**Art history in Africa** is often overlooked or, as harmful, taught in the context of a Western perspective. A polycentric and in-depth approach to the history of African contemporary art scene helps uncover developments that led to a vibrant art scene in Africa that fully utilizes technology, in all of its potential. **African artists themselves are at the forefront of aesthetic innovation and conceptual exploration**, creating artwork that examines **socio-economic and political realities**, traditions, and the diversity of experiences on the continent and in its Diaspora.

This new series comes with a caveat – there is a clear understanding that the art scene in Africa is incredibly varied; each country has their own practice; each artist has their own personal story. Africa is not a monolith, Artskop3437 is specifically founded on elevating the diversity of artistic experience from the continent. Increasing visibility of Africa's talent in the contemporary art scene can take several shapes including this running series. **We aim to add to the digital conversation public space with both comprehensive pieces, as well as dedicated deep dives and interviews with artists from the continent, and its diaspora.**

This series provides an opportunity to **examine the cultural, socio-economic, political and technological factors** that have given **rise to the development of new media art in Africa in the context of a global art history**, with a particular focus on questions of **performativity, identity politics and trans-national exchange.** While there are legacies of traditional art styles like Constructivism and Geometric abstractions, combined with visual investigations of immigration, globalization, and post-colonialism in the scope; also, part of the continent's practice is material play including digital art.

## Tech x Art

**Digital art** is an artistic practice that uses digital technology as part of the creative or presentation process and is a foundational part today's cutting-edge contemporary art, made possible by the rapid evolution of technologies. It's both part of the digital production and distribution of art and rests under the larger encompassing term of new media art. **New media art** is artwork that is created with new media technologies, this includes digital art, computer animation, virtual art, Internet art, interactive art, computer graphics and robotic, 3D printing,

**Artists in Africa are not limited by only tapping into the prolific artisanal knowledge of the continent, but also creating work in decidedly novel ways.** Kenyan painter and sculptor **Cyrus Kabiru**, defies the ideas of contemporary modernisation with work that deals with the transformation of modernisation and the idea of the future. He is best known for his sculptural spectacles or "C-Stunners." The 'Afrodazzled' glasses were made from recycled material and found material in Nairobi. His mixed media art challenges genres, and reflects not only his Kenyan roots but his international outlook.

New media tools overlapping materialism study is also a central part to Portuguese-Angolan artist **Pedro Pires** visual language. His practice focuses on exploring questions around stereotypes and identity. He creates sculptures and paper works that incorporate a wide range of mediums, such as plastic containers and rafia brooms to industrial metal grinders. Pires's practice works to explore questions about stereotypes and identity as well as the utilitarian histories of mass-production and exploitation.



Installation shot of “Six of one and half a dozen of the other” exhibition by Pedro Piros at Gallery MOMO Johannesburg. © Courtesy of Gallery MOMO

The medium of sculpture, including light, sound and projection encompasses an inventive multiplatform means of exhibiting and sharing content. Using technology to reveal the local, while existing in the global gives artists an enormous scope for production

