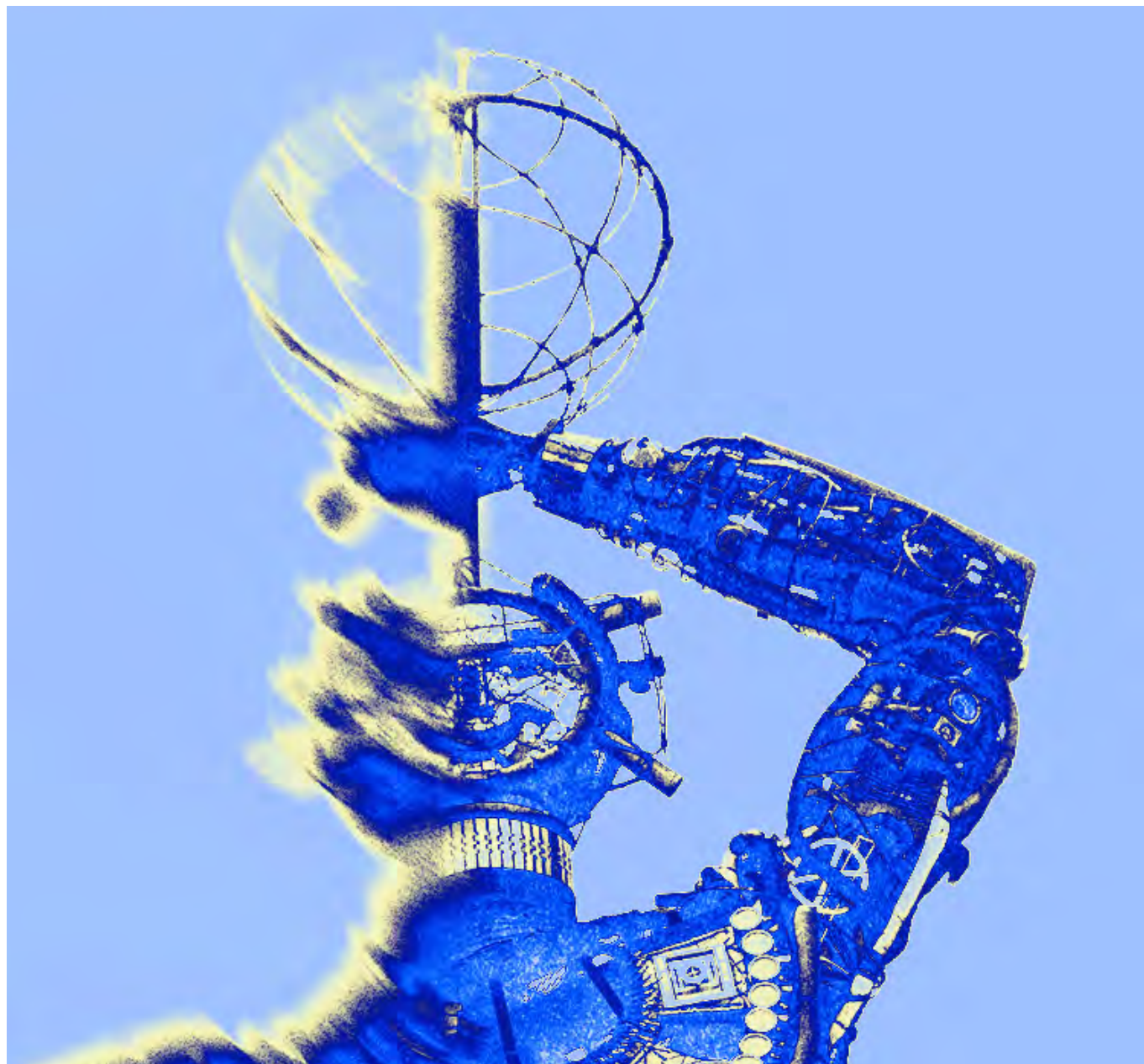


THE CONTEXTUOLOGY OF ART

A NEW METHOD FOR STUDYING ARTISTIC PRODUCTION



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The contextuology of art constitutes a transdisciplinary scientific method for analyzing, critiquing, and forecasting African artworks. By mobilizing the situated epistemologies of art history, philosophy of art, aesthetics, visual anthropology, sociology of reception, and African philosophies, it offers a relational and dynamic reading of meaning. The analysis of Joseph-Francis Sumégné's "La Nouvelle Liberté" reveals how a sculpture becomes an operator of aesthetic sovereignty, urban memory, and cultural hybridization. The contextuological table makes it possible to model the symbolic trajectories of the work, by crossing the variables of context, ideologies, perceptions, and transformations over time. The article opens advanced computational perspectives, notably through the structured indexing of interpretative data and the formulation of evolutionary models capable of simulating the evolution of the semiotic status of works. With this study produced by Artopia, the company positions itself as a methodological platform for research on art in Africa, an important player in critical and aesthetic sovereignty in the production of artistic knowledge.

Keywords : *Contextuology of art, contextual table, contextual analysis, African aesthetics, philosophy of art, Joseph-Francis Sumégné, La Nouvelle liberté, Doual'art, Salon Urbain de Douala (SUD), aesthetic sovereignty, prediction of meaning, sociology of reception, urban memory.*

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of African artworks cannot be reduced to formal contemplation or stylistic classification based on Eurocentric taxonomies. In a world rife with identity entropy and epistemic, political, and symbolic transformations, it has become imperative to develop a method capable of restoring to works their plural roots, their historical depth, their political power, and their living future. The contextuology of art is in line with this theoretical requirement. It proposes a radical paradigm shift by analyzing the work as a relational, shifting, and situated entity, constantly interacting with the visible and invisible forces that permeate it. It invites us to go beyond formalist or universalist approaches by placing works within the networks of production, reception, circulation, and memory that constitute them in all their complexity.

The contextuology of art is based on a transdisciplinary methodological architecture that combines art history, aesthetic philosophy, the sociology of reception, the anthropology of symbolic uses, and African ideas about place, time, and development. It thus opposes fixed object-based logics in favor of a systemic and dynamic analysis of works. By integrating variables of context, ideologies, intentions, perceptions, circulations, and historical triggers, it models the transformations of meaning over time based on an analytical framework structured by ten-year periods. This approach aims not only to describe, but also to anticipate the symbolic, critical, or heritage developments of a work.

Above all, contextuology engages a thinking about artistic life. It asserts that the work is not a closed entity, assigned to a style or era, but a moving, living reality, invested with multiple meanings according to the perceptions that constantly reanimate it. It is these perceptions—whether critical, popular, institutional, or emotional—that nourish the vitality of the work and rewrite its status over time. The work does not live because it is preserved; it lives because it is viewed, discussed, repurposed, and reappropriated. In this sense, contextuology is part of an epistemology of interpretative development, where meaning is a trajectory and not a fixed point. It is the science of a living art, always in the process of becoming.

The study of *La Nouvelle Liberté*, a monumental sculpture created in 1996 in Douala by the artist Joseph-Francis Sumégné, illustrates the fruitfulness of this approach. A work of recuperation and protest, it crystallizes postcolonial tensions, resistance, aesthetic innovations, political ruptures, and urban transformations. Through it, art becomes a gesture of emancipation, a stage for identity projection, and a matrix for the reinvention of memory. Contextual analysis allows us to reconstruct the multiple trajectories of this work, from its controversial reception to its process of symbolic heritage, including its popular and institutional reappropriation. Here, the study explores the potential offered by methods of temporal correlation, diachronic classification, and typological projection in the study of artworks. These tools, when integrated into a rigorous methodological architecture, not only allow us to structure sensitive information from artistic practices, but also to visualize their semantic metamorphoses over time.

With this approach, Artopia positions itself as a critical ecology of knowledge, where artistic trajectories are conceived through a modular interpretative combination. Artopia thus works

towards the production and creation of decentered educational and curatorial tools, as well as the popularization of science on art. The enterprise thus materializes the sovereignty of plural aesthetics in Africa. Contextuology is not simply a method of analysis. It is a response to the urgency of thinking about art from its own places of enunciation, in their complexity, their historicity, and their critical fertility. It engages a situated science of the sensible and a prospective writing of the future of African art.

1. METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES AND SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS

Consistent with its epistemological roots, contextuology is deployed as an operational method with precise and layered objectives. It is distinguished by its ability to articulate a plurality of regimes of intelligibility in order to produce a situated, critical, and prospective reading of works of art, particularly in African contexts. The following section explains the methodological aims pursued by contextuology in its ambition to profoundly renew the tools for analyzing, transmitting, and anticipating artistic meaning. From this perspective, contextuology aims to :

- **Reconstruct the contextual** density of a work of art in its visible and invisible dimensions;
- **Map the symbolic dynamics** that permeate a work according to a situated temporality;
- **Identify interpretative variations** according to categories of actors, display regimes, and political and cultural shifts;
- **Anticipate the semiotic**, critical, or heritage-related futures of a work through the analysis of contextual trajectories;
- **Establish a grounded critical methodology**, breaking with the universalizing paradigms of Western art history.

Far from being a theoretical speculation, contextuology offers a series of concrete and transversal applications. These scientific, pedagogical, political, and digital applications demonstrate that this method can inform fundamental research, training, and cultural policies. Thus, contextuology represents a major methodological advance for:

- **Fundamental research** : in art history, comparative aesthetics, and visual anthropology.
- **Applied research** : in heritage policies, museum strategies, and cultural mediation projects.
- **Training** : for art students, curators, and heritage researchers.
- **Cultural governance** : for African states, local authorities, and cooperation institutions.
- **Digital humanities** : through its structuring as an open, scalable database that is interoperable with artificial intelligence tools.

2. DELEGITIMIZING TO REFOUND: CRITIQUE OF EUROCENTRIC FRAMEWORKS

2.1 The Unthought of Aesthetic Universalism

The genealogy of the dominant categories of art history is deeply linked to the imperial ideology of modern Europe. From Winckelmann to Wölfflin, from Hegel to Panofsky, art history has been established as a closed normative system, in which the West sees itself as the origin, measure, and end of artistic creation. This system of thought has given rise to a historiography that reduces otherness to the picturesque, relics, magic, or ethnography. For Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, Africa must radically distance itself from this model, freeing itself from heteronomy—a state of will nourished outside itself, as much for social rules, influences, as for the principles of its action. It invites us to look at Africa as an *event space*¹, no longer simply through words, discourses, or deductive systems derived from experience, but to analyze human activity in the process.

2.2 «Contemporary African Art»: A Trapped Category

The category of contemporary African art is one of the recent manifestations of this logic of assignment to unfortunately globalizing taxonomies. It designates less a historical reality than a system of conditional inclusion, based on the degree of exoticism or transgression that African artists can produce for an international perspective. Its use without recontextualization masks the diversity of African aesthetic temporalities, the social logics of art production, and the ontological discontinuities specific to the territories of the Global South.

The critical stance that the contextology of art opposes to this category is that it operates as an instrument of ideological, commercial and curatorial conversion of difference, not as a recognition of structural heterogeneity – a reference to the non-uniformity or diversity of variables that make up a system, whether it be a population, an ecosystem, an economy, etc. In other words, it describes a system where the different parts or components present distinct characteristics or compositions. This perspective therefore implies that Africa is not contemporary because it joins the present of the centers, it is so by the plurality of its becomings, by the hybridization of its symbolic systems, by the power of its formal insurrections.

1. Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, *La crise du Muntu, Authenticité africaine et philosophie*, édition Présence africaine, Paris, 1977 et 1997, 239 pages.

3. EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE CONTEXTUOLOGY OF ART

The **contextuology of art** is a transdisciplinary critical methodology that positions the work of art as a dynamic device of meaning, structured by a constellation of social, historical, aesthetic, ideological, technical, and symbolic forces. It is based on a central assumption : ***the meaning of a work cannot be understood independently of the context of its production, reception, circulation, and transformations***. Contextuology considers every work to be a **relational structure in the making**, always in a situation, always situated. It is based on a radical shift in the center of gravity of artistic analysis. While traditional approaches generally start with the object – form, style, medium, author, intention – to assign it a place in a historical genealogy or a classificatory system, contextuology reverses this logic. She considers that the meaning of a work can only be deciphered from the **contextual structure** that produced it, made it exist, circulate, transform, interpret, recover, and make it a heritage.

She thus replaces object-based logic with a relational, dynamic, and situational logic by mobilizing several critical traditions: [Martin Heidegger's](#)² phenomenological approach to the sensible, philosophies of becoming, the sociology of cultural practices and mediation, African epistemologies, notably the work of Fabien Eboussi Boulaga on [Muntu](#)³, constructivist approaches to knowledge, and systemic theories of signification.

Contextuology is not a simple analytical technique but a comprehensive epistemological framework that proposes a radical renewal of the modes of intelligibility of art, particularly in African contexts where traditional mechanisms of recognition are often inadequate, projected, or reductive.

3.1 Ontological Foundations of the Method: Thinking of the Work as an Ecosystem of Meaning

The contextuology of art is based on a plural ontological foundation, designed to understand works not as closed objects or disembodied aesthetic entities, but as open, complex systems, pervaded by dynamics of meaning, power, memory, and development. This stance contrasts with formalist or essentialist approaches that reduce the work to its materiality or supposed intentionality. Far from considering art as an isolated production, the contextuological method engages a triple ontology that roots creation in networks of interaction, historical temporalities, and symbolic territories. These three levels are interdependent and constitute the philosophical and heuristic framework of the approach.

2. Martin Heidegger, *Être et temps*, Gallimard, Paris, 1927, 600 pages.

3. “*The Muntu is the human being in the African condition, who must assert himself by overcoming that which challenges his humanity and puts it at risk.*” Statement collected in *Free Reason and Reasonable Freedom: A Conversation between Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, Achille Mbembe, and Célestin Monga*, in A. Kom (ed.), Fabien Eboussi Boulaga: *The Philosophy of the Muntu*, Paris, Karthala, 2009, p. 291.

3.1.1 Ontology of Relation: The Artwork as a Nexus of Interactions

First, contextuology mobilizes an ontology of relation, according to which the artwork never exists as an autonomous entity, but always as an interface, a node, an interweaving of actantial, material, discursive, and invisible relationships. This approach draws inspiration from the work of [Bruno Latour](#)⁴ on actor-networks, but also from that of [Alfred Gell](#)⁵, who views the artwork as a social agent, a vector of intentional actions within a system of relationships. This relational logic resonates deeply with African philosophies, where the being is always understood in connection with other beings, visible and invisible, human and non-human. This relational ontology therefore posits that the artwork is pervaded by a plurality of regimes of meaning: the artist's intentions, collective imaginations, political forces, material circulations, technological mediations, etc. It becomes a boundary object, a space of friction and dialogue between social, economic, aesthetic and spiritual spheres.

3.1.2 Ontology of becoming: the work as a temporal trajectory

Second, the method is based on an ontology of becoming. A work is not what it is at the moment of its creation: it is what it becomes through time, contexts, receptions, reappropriations, silences, and reactivations. This dynamic approach assumes that the meaning of the work is always in flux, always exposed to rereading, controversy, oblivion, or resurrection.

African thought on time, as reflected in [Souleymane Bachir Diagne](#)⁶, allows us to rethink the temporality of the work not as a homogeneous line, but as a spiral, a rhythmicity traversed by accelerations, stagnations, and recurrences. Time is not a neutral background upon which art is inscribed; it is an active matrix of transformation. This approach establishes the principle of diachronic analysis in ten-year increments within the contextuological method: ten years constitute a strategic unit allowing us to observe the ideological, aesthetic, political, and symbolic mutations of the work, without freezing it within a linear historicity. This perspective of development also allows us to include phenomena of deferred heritage, postcolonial reinterpretation, and even memory diversion. The work becomes a living organism, an evolving system embedded in a perpetually reconfiguring ecology of meaning.

3.1.3 Situated Ontology: Meaning as an Effect of Place

Finally, contextuology is based on a situated ontology. The meaning of a work is never universal or transcendent. It is always situated. It emerges in a precise configuration, embedded in a lived geography, an embodied history, an active political context, and a particular symbolic horizon. This critical stance breaks with the universalist pretensions of classical art history, which, since the Western paradigm, tends to dissociate works from their environments of appearance, to erase

4. Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été moderne*, édition La Découverte, Paris, 1991, 210 pages.

5. Alfred Gell, *Art and agency : anthropological theory*, Oxford University Press, Clarendon, 1998, 296 pages.

6. Souleymane Bachir Diagne et Henri Ossébi, *The cultural question in Africa*, éditions Codesria, Dakar, 1996.

cultural singularities, and to neutralize the sensitive territorialities that underlie them.

From this perspective, context cannot be considered a simple setting or a circumstantial framework. It constitutes an ontogenetic matrix. It is an active agent in the production of meaning. It conditions regimes of perception, influences forms of reception, directs circulation circuits, and directly affects the aesthetic, social, and political value of the work. It is at the heart of the creative and interpretative process. It acts concretely and continuously on the existence of the work.

This idea of place as an agent of meaning is central to the work of Congolese philosopher [Valentin Yves Mudimbe](#)⁷ who has shown how African spaces have been historically constructed by a colonial topography of knowledge. However, these spaces can be reconfigured through symbolic, artistic, and intellectual practices capable of producing new arrangements of meaning. The space thus becomes a space of resistance and reinvention, a critical arena where subjectivities, memories, and belongings are redeployed.

In a complementary vein, a study published in 2009 on the Science website, entitled “*Late Pleistocene Demography and the Appearance of Modern Human Behavior*,” by Adam Powell, Stephen Shennan, and Mark G. Thomas, proposes a hypothesis according to which a large, connected population engaged in the exchange of ideas is more likely to generate cultural innovations. This capacity for innovation decreases as soon as the volume or intensity of interactions decreases. Transposed to the dynamics of the art world, this hypothesis suggests that the emergence and proliferation of cultural actors contributes to transforming the perspectives, narratives, and uses related to artworks.

The case of Joseph Francis Sumégné’s “*La Nouvelle Liberté*” perfectly illustrates this principle. The gradual broadening of the work’s reception, through the growing involvement of artists, researchers, institutions, journalists, critics, and audiences, has allowed for a diversified approach to its interpretation. This process has profoundly altered its reception and symbolic status within the city of Douala. The work has circulated between several, sometimes contradictory, interpretations, ranging from the expression of a popular imagination, the object of an esoteric or political reading, to the sign of gradual official recognition.

Each work is thus rooted in a symbolic territory, in a specific space-time, in a network of shared references, and in a meaningful materiality. New Freedom only has meaning in its urban context, in its relationship to the postcolonial memories of Douala, in its fabrication from recycled materials, in the tension it embodies between initial rejection and institutional reappropriation. It condenses the visible and invisible forces that permeate the city and its inhabitants.

This is why the contextual method is based on an ecosystemic conception of the work of art. It mobilizes a relational ontology, a logic of becoming, and attention to the concrete situation in which each work takes form and meaning. It calls for a multiple, shifting reading, anchored in the reality of places and bodies. It rejects formalist abstractions, disembodied interpretations,

7. Valentin Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, Indiana University Press, 1988, 256 pages.

or timeless generalizations. It affirms that the work is a being in relation, always transforming, in dialogue with its living environment. Meaning is never given once and for all. It is the active effect of a place, a history, a memory, and a present in tension.



Joseph Francis Sumégné, *The New Liberty*, 1996. Assemblage of recycled materials, 12 m high, 2 m in diameter, 8 tons. Property of the City of Douala. © Photograph: Yves Xavier Ndounda Ndongo, 2025.

3.2. The Implicit Power of Contextuology

In this research, several thinkers and theories can be drawn upon. Those selected are those most aligned with our ideological beliefs. As a result, many powerful dimensions are implicit in the contextuological method, even if they are not always explicitly named:

- **Potential legal function** : in debates over the restitution of works, contextuology can provide evidence of a living contextual connection, strengthening the argument for heritage reintegration.
- **Cultural diplomacy tool** : by objectifying the symbolic transformation of works, it can inform public cultural policies and international negotiations.
- **Training tool for future African curators** : it offers a critical methodology that can reorient the role of the exhibition curator in Africa.
- **Structured database for heritage artificial intelligence** : The tabular formalization of contextuology allows the construction of dynamic models of interpretative evolution based on time series, multivariate matrices, and transitional probabilities. These models pave the way for typological representations and projected critical scenarios. By cross-referencing empirical data (actors, perceptions, triggers, ideologies), it is possible to generate dynamic profiles of works, identify interpretative bifurcations, and detect emerging semantic mutations. These tools do not eliminate human subjectivity; they increase its readability. They enable a deep and augmented reading, based on a systemic architecture of meaning. These models can evolve into predictive systems built on differential equations, transition automata, or interpretation graphs.
- **Narrative matrix for museums**: it allows for the design of dynamic, non-linear exhibition itineraries, adaptable to the institutions' reception contexts and objectives.

3.3. Disciplinary Framework and Scientific Positioning

The strength of contextuology lies in its interdisciplinary foundation. It combines critical contributions from several scientific fields, rearticulated within a situated episteme that redefines the frameworks for understanding art from Africa and its diasporas. Here are some of the disciplines that contextuology draws upon :

Discipline	Contribution to contextuology
History of art	Diachronic perspective of works and styles.
Philosophy of art	Questioning the regimes of truth, ontology and aesthetics.
Anthropology of art	Taking into account uses, rituals, social and symbolic functions.
Sociology of art	Study of actors, circuits, institutions and legitimation strategies.
African philosophy	Registration in an episteme of place, of becoming, of totality.
Economics and cultural marketing	Analysis of symbolic value, circulation and institutionalization.
Intercultural communication	Study of the regimes of reception, translation and mediation of works.

The variables in the table were designed to cross **several disciplines simultaneously**:

Variable	Dominant discipline mobilized
Context	Sociology, political anthropology
Endogenous/exogenous ideologies	Philosophy, cultural epistemology
Authors / Intentions	Aesthetics, art history, criticism
Technical evolution	Aesthetics, art history, criticism
Demonstrations	Museology, geopolitics of art
Actors	Sociology of art networks
Perceptions	Intercultural communication
Status	Symbolic marketing, economics of art
Hybridization / Circulation	Postcolonial studies, cultural mobility
Triggers	History, political events, social ruptures

This disciplinary hybridization allows for the production of a **dense, situated and prospective analysis** of the work. Contextuology is thus part of an **inter-ontological and transversal logic**, operating a reconfiguration of the field of art research, by opening it to decolonial , situated and pragmatic approaches.

3.4. Methodological tools

To ensure the rigor and reproducibility of its analyses, contextuology uses structuring tools. Among these, the analytical grid and the contextual table function as instruments for objectifying the semiotic, relational, and temporal dynamics of the work. This method is based on two main tools:

The contextual analysis grid

It includes fundamental variables that allow the study of a work to be structured from a relational, evolutionary, and critical perspective. These variables are divided into temporal axes (periods) and thematic axes (context, ideologies, authors, perceptions, etc.). This structuring allows:

- A **diachronic analysis** of the evolution of the meaning of the work.
- A **systemic analysis** of the interactions between cultural, political, economic and aesthetic fields.
- A **situated analysis** of the differentiated readings of the work according to the actors.

The contextual table

This table relates the grid variables to time slices (by decade) to produce a **dynamic mapping of meanings**, a **symbolic trajectory of the work**, as well as a **model of critical foresight**. It thus becomes a tool for:

- **Semantic modeling**
- **Comparative analysis between works**
- **Visualization of perception regimes**
- **Prediction of heritage transformations**

The table is not just a descriptive tool: it allows us to formulate **interpretative hypotheses on the future of the work**, by observing the evolution of variables over time. For example:

- A work that was initially marginal but reappropriated by institutions after two decades follows a **curve of deferred institutionalization**.
- A work whose public perceptions shift from polemic to celebration shows a **reconstruction of the collective myth**.
- A work circulating from local space to global digital space presents a **logic of transcultural hybridization**.

These observations make it possible to create **typical profiles of the trajectories of works, particularly those from Africa**, which constitutes a major methodological advance for analysis, conservation, mediation, curating and cultural marketing.

3.5. Horizontal and vertical structuring of the table

The contextual table is based on a binary architecture that articulates temporal and thematic dimensions. This dual framework makes it possible to restore the trajectories of transformation of meaning in a dynamic modeling logic.

In horizontal terms, the periods allow us to describe the **transformations of the meaning** of the work through identifiable temporal sequences: from its creation to its showing, from its controversy to its recognition, from its local circulation to its globalization.

Vertically, the chosen variables make it possible to capture **all the structuring factors** that influence the symbolic life of the work: *the context, the ideologies, the authors, the intentions, the techniques, the displays, the actors, the perceptions, the status, the circulations, the triggers*.

This table functions as a **multi-scale map** of the work: each row is a vector, each column a moment. The analysis therefore does not simply describe, it **models a future**, as shown in the following table:

ANALYSIS OF A WORK THE CONTEXTUAL APPROACH OF ART (SPECIFY THE PERIOD OF STUDY AND PLACES)				
SPECIFY THE INFORMATION COLLECTION METHOD (OBSERVATION, DOCUMENTATION, INTERVIEWS, QUESTIONNAIRE)				
TITLE OF THE WORK ANALYZED				
Variables	Periods classified in 5 or 10 year increments (10 years is better because it is the minimum period for an ideological transformation)			
	N – N10	N10 – N20	N20 – N30	Average periodicity of variation
Place and period of production	The place and date or period of performance			
The context	This involves describing the sociological, anthropological, cultural, political and economic context			
Endogenous ideologies	It is about highlighting the philosophical, sociocultural, political and economic vision of the context of creation of a work.			
Exogenous ideologies	It is about highlighting the philosophical, sociocultural, political and economic vision of external contexts which interact with the endogenous context.			
Authors	The authors of a work can be the artist, an artist collective or a sponsor			
Creative intentions	This is about highlighting the main reasons that led to the creation of a work. Among these reasons are the desire to create, to learn, to experiment, to influence, to exhibit or the execution of a commission.			
Evolution of aesthetic and technical characteristics	Within a given spatiotemporal context, it is a matter of identifying the type of work, the style, the structure of the work, the materials, the techniques, the dimensions etc. It is also a matter of seeing how the work changes physically or visually. These changes can affect the way we look at it and appreciate it.			

Exhibition and demonstrations	Over a given period, it is a question of identifying the main places where the work was shown, what were the motivations, the objectives and the public.			
The actors: Identification of the main actors in the art world within a spatiotemporal context.	Artists			
	Researchers			
	Reviews			
	Commissioners			
	Journalists			
	Institutions			
	Audience			
	Others			
Perceptions and reappropriations: Highlighting the meanings, perceptions and usefulness that each actor in the art world gives to their work in a spatiotemporal context.	Artist			
	Researchers			
	Reviews			
	Commissioners			
	Journalists			
	Institutions			
	Audience			
	Others			
Number of Perceptions and appropriations per group of actors: list, quantify the perceptions and reappropriations emitted by each actor during the spatiotemporal context.	Artists			
	Researchers			
	Reviews			
	Commissioners			
	Journalists			
	Institutions			
	Audience			
	Others			
Status of the work	Evaluate the consideration of a work in a spatiotemporal context: It is a masterpiece, an archetype, a symbol, the work of a master etc.			
Hybridization and cultural circulation	How the work circulates in the international context			
Estimate of the price of the work	The price can promote the change in value of the work and therefore influence the appreciation.			
Trigger	Identify the important facts and moments that marked the life of the work and which encouraged the change in meaning			

3.6. Contextual research approach

The implementation of the contextual method follows a rigorous approach, in several successive stages. Each phase is designed to guarantee a situated, transversal and prospective analysis, based on empirical data interpreted in their complexity.

Step 1: Locating the work

- Selection of a significant work in an African, diasporic or globalized context.
- Identification of primary sources: photographs, archives, interviews, critical articles.

Step 2: Periodization

- Time division by decades from the date of creation.
- Analysis of historical, political, cultural or social ruptures in each section.

Step 3: Filling the grid

- Collection and interpretation of data by variables.
- Mobilization of cross-disciplinary disciplines to feed each variable.

Step 4: Construction of the contextual table

- Structured entry of information.
- Development of possible visualizations (diagrams, curves, dynamic infographics).

Step 5: Critical Analysis

- Cross-reading of symbolic mutations.
- Identification of perception curves, status changes, reappropriation dynamics.

Step 6: Prospective

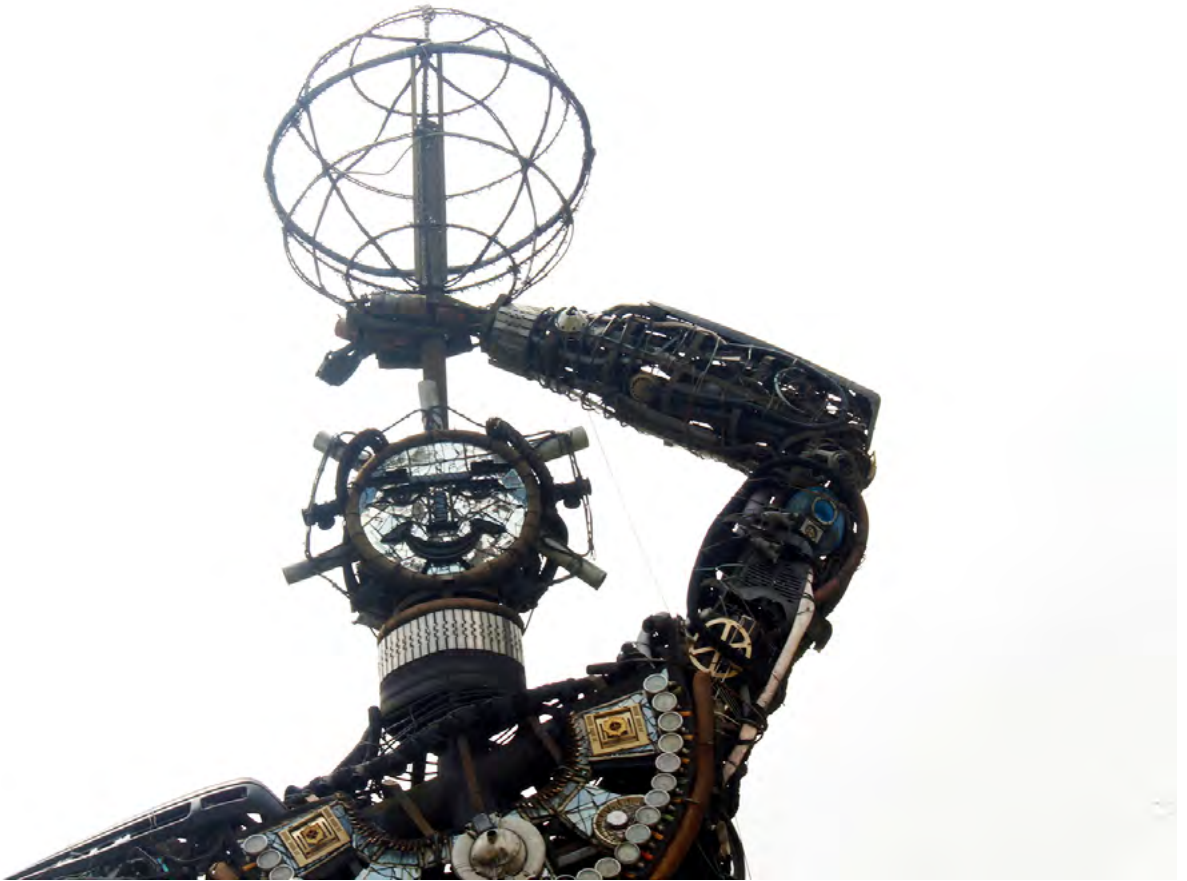
- Simulation of symbolic outcomes based on identified trends.
- Proposal of critical or heritage scenarios.

3.7. Ethical logic of the method: the refusal of decontextualizing abstraction

Contextuology claims a strong ethic: it **rejects the neutrality of the disembodied scholar**, it **restores voice to territories** and it **reconnects works to their communities of production, interpretation and use**. In this, it joins feminist theories of [care](#)⁸, indigenous ontologies, African cosmopolitics, critical pedagogies and epistemologies of reconstruction.

It integrates the **perception of all actors of the art world**: artists, researchers, critics, curators, journalists, institutions, audiences. It thus restores a **plurality of voices** to the analysis, breaking with the interpretative monopoly of Western experts. This is why the grid includes a quantification and qualification of perceptions and appropriations according to each group.

8. *Care*, as a feminist concept, encompasses both concern (solicitude, attentiveness to others) and caregiving (the concrete activities of looking after someone). It emphasizes the need to understand individual and contextual situations in order to respond appropriately to the needs of others.



SUMÉGNÉ'S NEW FREEDOM : A WORK OF CONTEXT

4.1 A founding gesture in the world city

La Nouvelle liberté stands out as a monumental sculpture, twelve meters high, made from recycled materials. It embodies with rare intensity the tensions, contradictions, and aspirations of Cameroon at the end of the 20th century. The work took shape at a political moment marked by an attempt at democratic reconstruction, following the constitutional revision of January 1, 1996, which opened a new horizon for individual and collective freedoms in Cameroon. Through this work, Sumégné does not simply produce an aesthetic form. He engages in a symbolic gesture of considerable scope. He projects a vision of the future that is neither limited to imitation nor rejection of the West. He proposes a critical and creative digestion of colonial otherness, asserting a singular aesthetic and political sovereignty.

Deïdo roundabout in Douala in July 1996, *La Nouvelle Liberté* is a joint donation to the city from the artist and the doual'art organization. It depicts a dancing human figure, balanced on its right leg, holding the planet above its head with its left arm. The work, weighing a total of eight tons, rests on a two-meter-high reinforced concrete pedestal. Upon its installation, it sparked mixed reactions in the press. Some critics even compared it to the United States Statue of Liberty. For doual'art, this work represents the culmination of a process of revitalizing contemporary aesthetics in Cameroon. It has become a symbol of a desire for political decentralization and a strengthening of freedom of expression in public spaces.

The legal context reinforces this reading. Constitutional Law N° 96/06, adopted on 1st January 1996, contains unprecedented provisions on fundamental freedoms. From its preamble, we can read that “*No one may be disturbed because of his origins, his opinions or his beliefs in religious, philosophical or political matters, subject to respect for public order and morality*” and subsequently, we can further highlight this extract: “*Freedom of communication, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of association and the right to strike are guaranteed under the conditions laid down by law.*” This new legal basis creates an environment favorable to a more daring artistic expression, which Sumégné will fully invest.

However, far from achieving unanimous approval, *La Nouvelle Liberté* sparked a series of controversies. It quickly became the subject of heated debate in the public and media spheres. The work disturbed as much as it fascinated. It did not celebrate an abstract ideal of freedom. It questioned identity in all its forms, whether individual, ethnic, civic, collective, or national. It challenged dominant aesthetic norms. It was rooted in the contradictions of the city and its history.

Researcher [Dominique Malaquais⁹](#), who has studied the work extensively, writes about it: “*For Sumégné and doual’art, the aim with La nouvelle liberté was to celebrate the city, but without idealizing it. The goal was to talk about it as it is, shambolic, shaky, difficult. The man with the globe, they say, shows Douala as it is in its toughest neighborhoods. He represents the city of pain - its inhabitants nickname it Doula, which is crumbling under waste but nevertheless manages to vibrate intensely.*”

This ambivalent reception manifested itself very quickly. Starting in August 1996, virulent articles appeared in the local press. Under pressure, Sumégné and doual’art gradually nuanced their initial statements. The artist claimed that the work was a “gift to the Sawa people,” while doual’art, disagreeing with this communal interpretation, reaffirmed that *La Nouvelle Liberté* was a gift to the Cameroonian people as a whole. This divergence revealed a fundamental interpretative divide, revealing ethnopolitical tensions and representational issues in urban spaces.

The controversy doesn’t end there. Cartoonist Elimbi, in a visual board published offers an esoteric reinterpretation of the work. According to him, *La Nouvelle Liberté* would be at the service of occult forces, thus extending a tradition of distrust towards any form of plastic expression not conforming to the dominant aesthetic or religious canons. This accusation, far from being marginal, participates in the social fabrication of meaning around the work and reveals the persistence of an imaginary of suspicion in the Cameroonian public space.

Thus, *La Nouvelle Liberté* cannot be reduced to a simple monumental sculpture. It is a complex symbolic operator, a point of condensation of the historical, political, social, and spiritual tensions of the global city of Douala. It crystallizes the contradictions of the postcolonial, while opening breaches towards an aesthetic of reinvention, sovereignty, and becoming.

9. Dominique Malaquais, *Une nouvelle liberté ? Art et politique urbaine à Douala (Cameroun)*, Article disponible en ligne à l'adresse : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-et-histoire-2006-1-page-111.htm>



Elimbi 28, *La nouvelle liberté réinterprétée*, le 13/2/1997, bande dessinée. Source de l'image : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-afrique-et-histoire-2006-1-page-111.htm>

4.2. A work in progress, a pivotal object

The contextual analysis shows how *La Nouvelle Liberté* changes status every ten years on average: from marginality to local recognition, from critical visibility to institutional appropriation, to its digital heritage. It is simultaneously a work, an icon, an urban marker, a memorial archive, a subject of scientific study, a tourist object, and a museum reference.

It becomes a **pivotal object** between several fields: it articulates the aesthetics of scrap metal, ecological criticism, traditional plastic heritage, urban monumentality, the memory of democratic struggles and pan-African utopia. This plurality of meanings can only be grasped by a transversal method, capable of linking artistic intention, social reception, cultural mediations, digital representations and heritage policies.

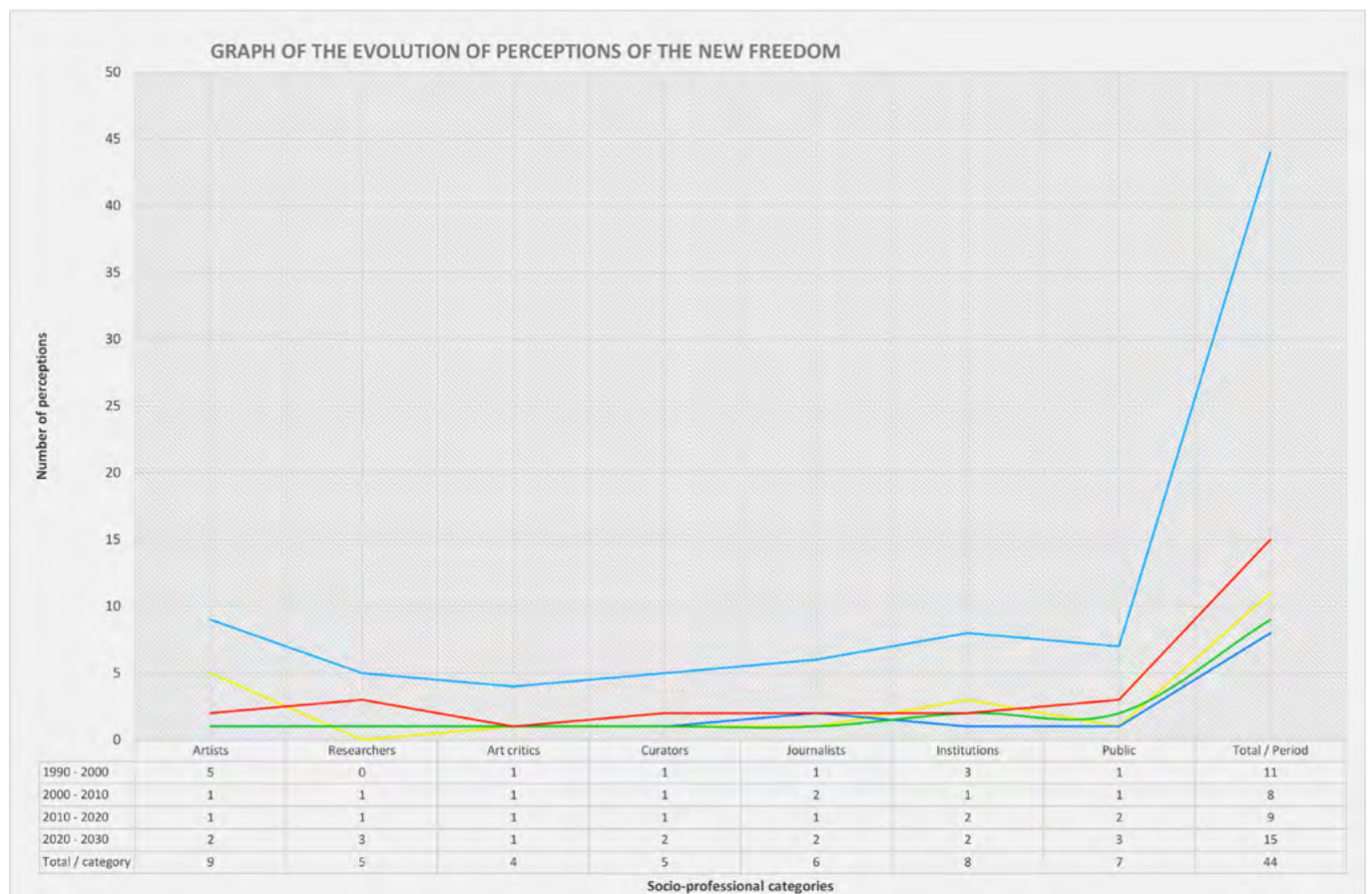
4.3. Table of contextual analysis of the work *La Nouvelle Liberté*

This synthetic table articulates the fundamental dimensions of the contextual grid, making it possible to model the dynamics of meaning, reception, circulation and mutation of the work over time.

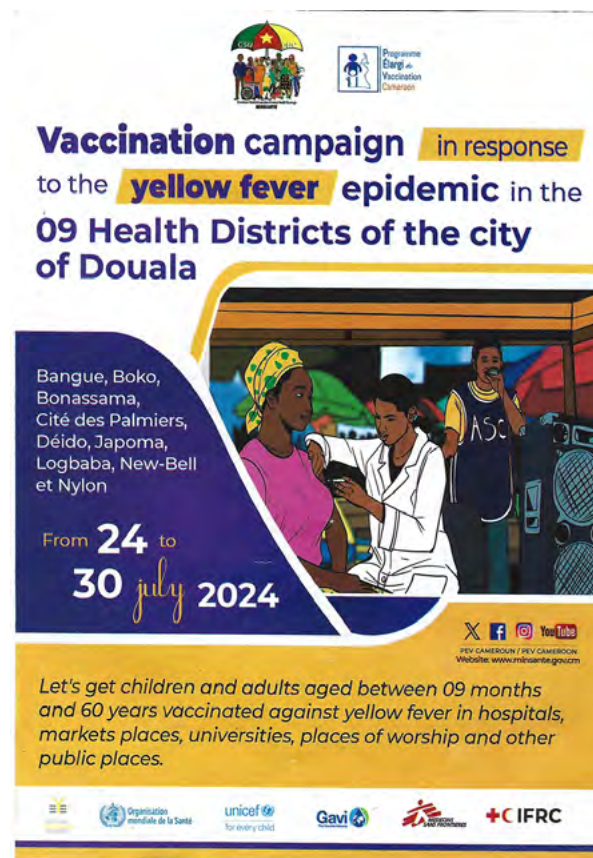
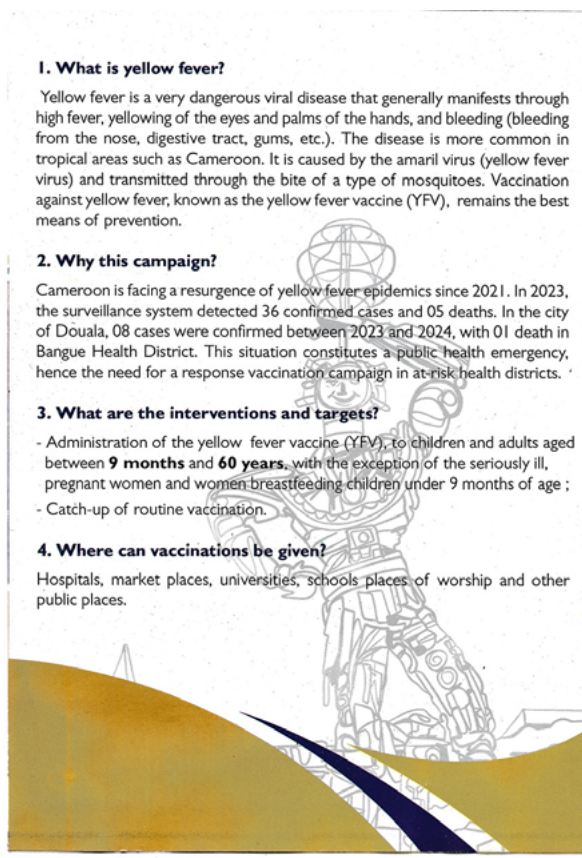
ANALYSIS OF A WORK THE APPROACH TO THE CONTEXTUALOLOGY OF ART FROM 2020 TO 2024 IN THE CITIES OF YAOUNDÉ AND DOUALA					
DATA COLLECTED THROUGH OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION.					
THE NEW FREEDOM OF JOSEPH FRANCIS SUMEGNE					
Variables	Périods				
	1990 – 2000	2000 – 2010	2010 – 2020	2020 – 2030	Average periodicity of variation
Place and period of production	Work produced by doual'art and created in Cameroon as part of the Douala Urban Salon (SUD) in 1996	Building local awareness and image of this work	Expansion of international recognition by art world players.	Even if the work will not always be known to the entire Cameroonian population, questions about its conservation, its promotion or its heritage will give rise to its cultural re-evaluation.	10 years (decade)
The context	Beginning of multi-party politics, censorship of freedom of expression despite its legal framework, rapid urbanization of Douala, search for identity, economic and social tensions	Weak economic growth, rising debates on African modernity and Pan-Africanism	Dynamics of globalization, intercultural dialogues, promotion of contemporary African art	Consolidation of African heritage policies, urban preservation issues	Decade : Period marked by significant socio-political, economic and aesthetic changes
Endogenous ideologies	Affirmation of Cameroonian cultural identity, promotion of local heritage, syncretism between tradition and modernity.	Affirmation of art in Africa as a vector of memory and innovation, openness to social criticism	Promotion of a hybrid aesthetic between local heritage and global influences, significant financial flows in the art market	Revaluation of heritage and symbols in a context of globalization, restitution of looted works, resistance to the logic of exclusion	Transformation every 10 years : Endogenous vision oscillating between identity affirmation and critical openness renewed on average every 10 years
Exogenous ideologies	European and Western postcolonial influence, growing recognition of African artists in the global market	Globalization of so-called contemporary art, transcontinental cultural exchanges, decolonial critiques and research	More intense intercultural dialogue, valued cultural hybrids, circulation of works in international circuits	International appropriation, debates on heritage, increased circulation via digital networks	Cyclic interactions: Interactions that occur every 10 years on average between exogenous and endogenous contexts in dynamics, gradually influencing globalization
Authors / Major Actors	Joseph Francis Sumégné, Cameroonian sculptor and doual'art	Foreign artists, doual'art, journalists, exhibition curators, cultural institutions	So-called contemporary art in Cameroon is consecrated in academia with the doctoral thesis Ph.D of Prof. Assako Assako PH.S. 2011, art in Cameroon from the 20th to the beginning of the 21st century : study of sculptural expressions in urban environments , University of Yaoundé 1. The State of Cameroon recognized Sumégné as a great artist in 2016.	Researchers, heritage institutions, exhibition curators, public authorities	Multiplication of actors: The emergence of new players such as artificial intelligence or augmented reality developers to study this work
Creative intentions	Expressing the quest for freedom and cultural emancipation and symbolic representation of urban society	Disseminate a critical vision of African modernity, promote recycled materials, and promote committed art	Demonstrations of symbolic works of intercultural dialogue and promotion of art in Cameroon in the world	Consolidate heritage and cultural status, participate in collective memory.	Stratified and diversified intentions: Evolution of intentions related to recognition and heritage. It is possible that Sumégné claims a heritage position for himself.
Evolution of aesthetic and technical characteristics	Monumental sculpture of almost 12 meters, assembly of recycled materials (scrap metal), raw and expressive style	Technical development, emphasis on the recovery and recycling of urban waste	The work is integrated into the city's urban design. It is decorated with garlands and has become the city's Christmas tree during the end-of-year celebrations.	Physical conservation, possible restoration, first-rate tourist monument in Douala	Slow plastic transformations: Technical transformation around recycled materials, strong aesthetic stability.
Exhibition and demonstrations	Presented at SUD 1996, public place, high local visibility	One of the city's landmark works, a major production of Doual'art and art of the last 50 years in Cameroon	Presentation and promotion of Sumégné in museums and biennials in Africa and Europe	Appearance of important publications on heritage and restitutions	Growing mediation: Period marked by the construction of new narratives around the New Freedom

The actors: Identification of the main actors in the art world within a spatiotemporal context.	The artists, doual'art, the public, the journalists		Doual'art, journalists, exhibition curators, foreign cultural institutions, the urban community of Douala	Doual'art, journalists, exhibition curators, foreign cultural institutions, the urban community of Douala, researchers	Local cultural institutions, exhibition curators, foreign cultural institutions, researchers	Multiplication of the semantic spectrum: Greater involvement of conservation and restoration specialists
Perceptions and reappropriations: Highlighting the meanings, perceptions and usefulness that each actor in the art world gives to their work in a spatiotemporal context.	Artists	An expression of freedom, experimentation, resistance, and a terrifying work for some artists. For Sumégné, it is also a gift to the Sawa people.	Symbol of committed art	Artistic validation	Re-evaluation of identity and aesthetic discourses	Aesthetic questioning
	Researchers	The discourse is focused on traditional arts with little interest in so-called contemporary practices.	The development of artistic training institutions places this artist as an important part of the local scene.	Academic validation	Study of the work as urban heritage, research framework for conservation technologies and tourism development	The challenge for academic research involves interdisciplinarity, the establishment of new methodologies and probably new sciences to deepen the study of this work.
	Reviews	Mixed reception	Acceptance of the work as works of art	Emblematic work of an era	The work is a synthesis between Western art and Cameroonian art.	For critics, with the development of science, the web and cultural exchanges, the discourse on the work is increasingly informed, in-depth and expert on the New Freedom.
	Curators	Experimental Work	Masterpiece of so-called contemporary art in Cameroon	Jala'a Studies from Sumégné	New Freedom is part of collective memory and national heritage	This work, like all the artist's other creations, is an opportunity to develop artistic or editorial projects that run counter to Western discourses on Africa.
	Journalists	Violent criticism	Focus on social and environmental impact	Tempered speeches	New Freedom as a basis for developing a cultural and tourism policy	For journalists, the work has since its creation raised debates on the importance of art in society.
	Institutions	For doual'art, this work is a gift to the city, and later it becomes a gift to Cameroon as a whole. Although this approach aims for a strategic leadership position in so-called contemporary art in Cameroon, it marks a difference from that of Sumégné.	Bringing art back to the public	State and political consecration	New Liberty is one of the symbols of the city of Douala and a national heritage	Construction of an identity, a style, a positioning on the local artistic scene or lobbying
	Audience	Violent criticism	Object of curiosity	Archetype and iconic monument of the city of Douala	Tourist spot, source of iconographic inspiration and economic sources for small businesses	Gradual reappropriation in daily life
	Others	-	-	-	-	-
Number of Perceptions and appropriations per group of actors: list, quantify the perceptions and reappropriations emitted by each actor during the spatiotemporal context.	Artists	04	01	01	02	08
	Researchers	0	01	01	03	05
	Reviews	01	01	01	01	04
	Curators	01	01	01	02	05
	Journalists	01	02	01	02	06
	Institutions	03	01	02	02	08
	Audience	01	01	02	03	07
	Others	-	-	-	-	-

Status of the work	A masterpiece of contemporary Cameroonian art, an urban and cultural symbol	An emblematic work of artistic recycling and social criticism	Archetype of the fusion of tradition and modernity in contemporary African art	Heritage symbol to be promoted	Increasing valuation: Status strengthened over time
Hybridization and cultural circulation	Local circulation, first exchanges with African artists	Broadcasting begins in French-speaking Africa and Europe	Participation in increased global broadcasting	Integration into the local economic system and international heritage circuits	Global hybridization: Significant progress towards global cultural hybridization
Estimate of the price of the work	Invaluable because of its strong symbolic value	-	-	High heritage value, tourist potential	Speculative valuation of assets: Progressive economic valuation
Trigger	Installed in 1996, immediate mixed recognition	-	-	Urban and museum heritage policy	Contextual turning points that can be identified: Key moments related to public art and heritage



28 years later in 2024, we can observe in filigrée, a graphic rendering of Sumégné's New Freedom in a flyer (Image 07) for a yellow fever vaccination campaign of the Ministry of Public Health in Douala. A work that was once controversial has become a graphic medium that serves various causes, a visual identity of the city and of Cameroon in which every Cameroonian can recognize themselves with a certain pride. Artists, politicians and populations have each appropriated it in their own way without having an education or artistic sensitivity.



5. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY OF THE NEW FREEDOM: A MONUMENTAL SCULPTURE, AN ACT OF EMANCIPATION AND AFFIRMATION OF IDENTITY

La Nouvelle Liberté, created in 1996 in Douala, emerged in a particularly difficult historical and sociopolitical context. The early 1990s in Cameroon, as in many African countries, were marked by a difficult democratic transition. After decades of one-party rule, freedom of expression was largely curtailed, the independent press muzzled, and any political dissent often repressed. It was in this climate of tension and control that Sumégné crafted a work that was as much a cry for liberation as it was a forward-looking vision of a more open future.

5.1 Freedom of expression as a central and underlying issue

The sculpture, through its monumentality and imposing materiality, becomes a powerful symbol of freedom of expression and the struggle for democracy. Through this artistic gesture, Sumégné does not simply represent freedom as an abstract idea: he makes it a tangible, palpable presence, forged by resistance and creativity. The massive and robust figure seems to emerge from the chaos of urban waste, a metaphor for a society marked by the vestiges of colonization and the challenges of development. The choice of recycled materials is significant: it embodies the capacity for transformation, resilience, and reinvention, qualities essential to the conquest and effective exercise of freedom of expression in a context where it is often repressed.

5.2 Postcolonial emancipation and identity affirmation

Beyond mere political representation, the work engages with the notion of emancipation. It rejects classical Western aesthetic norms by promoting an urban, popular, DIY, and vernacular aesthetic. This reappropriation of materials and forms demonstrates a strong desire for cultural affirmation, a rejection of the alienation imposed by colonial and neocolonial systems. *La Nouvelle Liberté* thus becomes an emblem of a Cameroonian identity in full mutation, an identity that asserts its roots while embracing modernity. This creative tension between tradition and innovation, between the local and the global, makes the work a major symbolic pivot.

5.3 An emerging ecological awareness in contemporary African art

The use of scrap metal, plastic, and many other reclaimed materials also reflects an ecological awareness that was avant-garde for its time. In rapidly growing African cities, urban waste is a major issue, and its reuse in art becomes a form of social and environmental commentary. This approach places *La Nouvelle Liberté* within a dynamic of sustainability and responsibility, in line with contemporary global concerns, while remaining rooted in Cameroonian reality.

5.4 A living work over time: evolution of status and perceptions

Over more than two decades, *La Nouvelle Liberté* has seen its status evolve: from a locally engaged expression in the face of the restrictions of the 1990s, it has gradually become a masterpiece recognized by the vast majority of art worlds in Cameroon. This recognition is linked to the growing appreciation of contemporary African art on the global stage, but also to the intrinsic strength of the work. The diversity and multiplication of actors (artists, researchers, critics, curators, journalists, cultural institutions, and the public) over the years has enriched its interpretative field. Each group invests the work with a particular reading, contributing to the complexity and vitality of its symbolic and heritage aura.

5.5 Cultural hybridization: a permanent dialogue between endogenous and exogenous

The work also embodies a continuous process of cultural hybridization. Endogenous ideologies—Cameroonian identity and political aspirations—resonate with exogenous artistic, aesthetic, and philosophical influences stemming from cultural globalization. This ongoing dialogue is marked by an average periodicity of 10 years, highlighting a progressive and rhythmic evolution of the work's meaning and reception. This dynamic makes *La Nouvelle Liberté* not only a work of art but a true vector of intercultural exchange, contributing to the redefinition of contemporary African artistic paradigms.

5.6 Prospective and memorial perspectives

From the outset, it should be noted that *La Nouvelle Liberté* is not known throughout Cameroon. Between 2022 and 2023, we visited the cities of Ngaoundéré, Garoua, and Maroua. In discussing art in Cameroon with locals, it was noted that a large portion of the population is unfamiliar with this work, its creator, and even less so with institutions like Doual'art. This raises several questions related to the conditions that must be met for a work to become part of a country's collective and national memory.

Despite this, *La Nouvelle Liberté* is not limited to its spatial or temporal anchoring: it is part of a logic of memorial projection and symbolic foresight. As a public work, located at a strategic crossroads in Douala, it becomes a visual and mental landmark for several generations. Its function goes beyond simple aesthetics or political testimony: it becomes a tool for constructing collective memory, a marker of the historical, social, and cultural transformation of postcolonial Cameroon. In a country where heritage policies are still in their infancy, this work acquires, almost organically, the status of an unofficial monument, both witness to and actor in a national narrative in the making.

In terms of memory, *La Nouvelle Liberté* stands as a living archive. It summons memories of the democratic struggles of the 1990s, the sociopolitical tensions that marked this period, but also the emergence of a creative, resilient, and inventive civil society. Every look at it, every photograph, every public debate contributes to its symbolically enriching it. Its gradual integration into national heritage discourses, tourist promotion circuits, and educational narratives signals a reappropriation by institutions and local communities alike.

Looking ahead, the work opens a horizon of possibilities for public art in Africa. It inaugurates a form of critical, participatory, and contextual artistic intervention that directly questions urban space, cultural policies, and collective imaginations. It thus inspires a new generation of African artists to invest in public spaces not only as exhibition spaces, but also as arenas for social dialogue, cultural transmission, and urban transformation.

In this perspective, *La Nouvelle Liberté* is also a manifesto for an Africa that creates its own symbols, inscribed in a long, non-linear temporality, where memory, current events, and the future intertwine in a poetics of becoming. As such, it embodies a model of a foundational work, capable of bringing together around itself a critical consciousness, an active memory, and an aesthetic projection of the future.

6. AESTHETIC SOVEREIGNTY AND CRITICAL INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The contextuology of art is not simply a methodology for aesthetic reading. It participates in a broader political project: that of reappropriating the mechanisms of production, circulation, and legitimization of meaning in the field of African art. It redefines the very conditions of critical authority. In this way, it constitutes an **epistemic counter-infrastructure** opposed to the centrality of Western museums, major international fairs, and hegemonic curatorial networks.

The appropriation of this method by researchers and African and international cultural institutions requires a revolution on several levels. First, a **curricular overhaul** in art schools, universities, and research centers, where students are still too often trained using exogenous canons and paradigms. Second, a **requalification of cultural mediators**, exhibition curators, journalists, critics, mediators, and programmers, so that they can integrate the tools of contextuology into their practice. Finally, a **reconfiguration of public policies**, which must move away from museum or heritage mimicry to support the emergence of rooted critical forms.

Artopia, as an ecosystem of intelligibility, positions itself as an institution of **sovereignty of African aesthetics**. It hosts and documents artists' journeys, offers contextual analysis grids, preserves digital archives of major works, and organizes transdisciplinary meetings on the futures of art in Africa. It functions as a living database, a space for theoretical confrontation, a decentralized school of the arts, a mobile critical scene. By its existence, it demonstrates that critical thinking can be territorialized, that forms of intellectual authority can be de-Westernized, and that the African continent is not condemned to wait for the validation of others to think about its own forms.

From this perspective, contextuology reveals itself to be more than a method: it is an **operational philosophy of the world**, capable of generating new forms of mediation, alternative symbolic economies, political narratives rooted in the practices of the sensible. It makes possible an ecology of meaning where art is at once an instrument of freedom, a territory of experimentation, a place of active memory and a language of collective projection.

7. LIMITS AND DEVELOPMENTS OF THE CONTEXTUOLOGY OF ART

Although operational, contextuology requires:

- A critical mass of data for each work.
- A strong synergy between cultural actors, institutions and researchers.
- A process of empirical validation of its prospective projections.
- Technical interoperability (digitalization, open data, visualization).

Its evolution involves the creation of:

- From an **open access platform** of contextual files.
- From **analysis support software** for researchers and curators.
- From a **research center dedicated** to the contextual architecture of artistic meaning.

As a situated, critical and operational method, the **contextuology of art** allows us to think of works not as fixed objects but as living nodes of memory, identity, tension, projection and circulation. It constitutes an essential contribution to the rewriting of knowledge about art from Africa and for the world. Any serious theoretical construction requires **critical reflexivity on its own conditions of possibility**. Contextuology, as a paradigm, cannot avoid a discussion on its current limits, its blind spots and the future conditions of its expansion.

A first limitation is experimental: contextuology remains, for the moment, a method not yet applied in the field. Few African works have yet been the subject of systematic contextuological analyses, apart from *La Nouvelle Liberté*. It will therefore be a matter of constituting, in the medium term, a database of case studies covering different countries, media, periods and reception regimes. This comparative corpus will make it possible to test the relative universality of the grid and to develop its parameters.

Second, the contextual method requires a **density of empirical information** that not all contexts always make accessible: local historical data, oral histories, exhibition archives, interviews with audiences, etc. It therefore presupposes a strong synergy between researchers, cultural institutions, artists and local communities. Without this synergy, the risk is to repeat a scholarly reading detached from the contextual experience it claims to rehabilitate.

Third, the question of the **scientific validation** of symbolic predictions formulated from contextual grids remains an epistemological challenge. It will be necessary to produce longitudinal monitoring tools, reception verification protocols, or even computational models to model the symbolic futures of works.

CONCLUSION

The contextuology of art, as developed in this study, goes far beyond the simple function of a methodological tool for analyzing works. It asserts itself as a way of thinking about artistic life, a science of symbolic becoming, an attentive listening to the perpetually transforming sensory. Far from freezing the work into an immutable artifact, this approach conceives of all creation as an evolving semiotic organism, a dynamic knot of meanings that are constantly readjusted according to the contexts, the actors involved and the regimes of perception.

Thus, the work does not live biologically, but existentially, ontologically and relationally. It exists through the gazes that construct it, the discourses that mobilize it, the bodies that receive it, the technologies that disseminate it and the controversies that reinterpret it. Its meaning is the moving product of these social interactions. Contextuology therefore proposes a situated and stratified reading, which articulates the visible and invisible dimensions of meaning while valuing the plurality of interpretations as so many vital forces infused into the work.

By modeling these interpretative variations according to differentiated temporalities and reception logics, this method allows us to map the living future of the work. It reveals that the work is much more than an object to be decoded: it is an aesthetic event, a field of forces in tension, a space for the emergence of collective subjectivities. Taking into account diverse perceptions, whether from lay audiences, institutions, anonymous artists or non-academic perspectives, gives contextuology a new epistemic value by recognizing the singular dynamic that each reading imprints on the trajectory of the work.

monumental sculpture, *La Nouvelle Liberté*, perfectly embodies this interpretative vitality. Marginalized at its beginnings, then reappropriated, valorized, integrated into heritage discourses, and even diverted for health communication campaigns, it demonstrates that the work is constantly rewritten in the eyes of successive generations. It has transformed into a collective organism, a symbol vibrating to the rhythm of urban tensions and hopes. Each perception, each debate, each use constitutes tangible proof that art remains a living being in society.

To overcome the limitations identified in this study, several methodological adjustments are possible. These include integrating dynamic mapping tools in collaboration with designers, data scientists, and cultural geographers to visualize the symbolic trajectories of works over time. The development of an Artopia contextual analysis application could automate crucial phases such as collecting perceptions, cross-referencing historical data, and probabilistic modeling. Furthermore, the creation of contextuology training workshops for researchers, artists, and students, particularly in African art schools and universities, would strengthen the dissemination and appropriation of this method. The publication of a critical typology of contexts, distinguishing between contexts of rupture, continuity, crisis, and hybridization, would finally help refine the method according to the specificities of each situation.

On a theoretical level, contextuology would also benefit from engaging in dialogue with other emerging paradigms from the Global South, such as Black studies, indigenous museology,

archipelagic studies, aesthetics of reparation, and multiple ontologies. These articulations will allow us to move beyond African singularity and position contextuology as a strategic node within a global constellation of epistemic resistances and critical reconstructions.

Ultimately, contextuology is much more than a method of analysis: it constitutes a science of movement, a grammar of instability, a critical poetics of situated interpretation. It restores to works their living and unstable dimension, refusing to confine them to closed taxonomies or fixed museum classifications. Every work, provided that we pay attention to it, continues to speak, to move, to amaze, to resist and to survive as long as there is a world to look at it and bring it to life.

Thinking about a work through contextuology thus amounts to restoring its capacity to exist over time as an event that is always beginning again, a meaning that is always to come, a memory that is always under construction. It is recognizing that art is alive because each era lends it new faces, new affects, and unforeseen uses. It is precisely in this dynamic of vitalization that the highest scientific and political legitimacy of contextuology resides: it demonstrates that the work of art is never what we say about it once and for all, but what we make of it collectively over time.



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