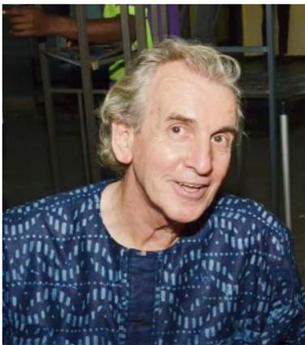


...Refocusing attention on African history, and cultural identity

By Pascal Ott



“...not only a space for sharing and discovering works rarely broadcast on television by African filmmakers, but filmmakers from the rest of the world, who have made films in Africa. Films that shake up, question and give food for thought without delivering pre-established conclusions by providing access to other representations of African realities



[Pascal Ott | LinkedIn](#)

AFTER all these years spent in English-speaking West Africa and more particularly almost 30 years in Nigeria continuously, the *i-Represent International Documentary Film Festival* is undoubtedly one of the first major cultural events to which I had the privilege to attend over the years.

First and foremost, my warmest congratulations to the team who set up this rich and intelligent film festival and who knew how to keep it alive for 10 years against all odds.

Most unfortunately, it was only the coronavirus pandemic that abruptly brought a halt to the 10th edition and the proposed anniversary celebrations of iREP. This meeting, which brings together several hundred spectators every year at Freedom Park, which is also celebrating its 10 years of existence, will definitely be able to resurface during 2020 to the delight of all lovers of documentary film and “*cinéma vérité*”.

The *iREP Festival* is not only a space for sharing and discovering works rarely broadcast on television by African filmmakers, but filmmakers from the rest of the world, who have made films in Africa. Films that shake up, question and give food for thought without delivering pre-established conclusions by providing access to other representations of African realities.

It is a free annual event which aims to support freedom of expression, thought and creation to promote and encourage intercultural dialogue. I share the idea that the influence of world cultures is a necessary step for mutual knowledge and recognition in order to encourage all audiences to reflect on historical, political, economic, social and cultural realities in order to contribute to bringing people of all origins together.

Formerly banished from history, Africa is now at the heart of all debates. While colonial cinema freezes the African in stereotypes, the media make him hungry whose agony never ceases to become commonplace.

African cinema -- fiction, documentary or "cinéma vérité" - rejects the "image d'Epinal" and the morbid cliché, and opens the way to new questions about the relationship between image and memory. Beyond the cinematographic interest of the festival, which is obviously essential, iREP aims to support cultural exception. It is a question of contributing in priority to the influence of African documentary culture on the whole continent and beyond.

Africa, iREP, makes its cinema, its storytellers and their images have a lot to teach us. A documentary film is a critique of everyday life and it is therefore for this reason that this wonderful festival must be helped to continue living and making us better.

Happiest 10th anniversary my friends and brothers, long live iREP and more creative years to come!

- *Ott, former programme director at the French Cultural Centre, Lagos, is a culture diplomat and art activist*
