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CAS acquires John Akomfrah and Kader Attia works at Frieze London for Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

5 OCTOBER 2016 BY [MARCUS CROFTON \(HTTP://WWW.CONTEMPORARYARTSOCIETY.ORG/AUTHOR/MARCUS-CROFTON/\)](http://www.contemporaryartsociety.org/author/marcus-crofton/)

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John Akomfrah, *Peripeteia*, 2012. Single channel HD colour video, 5.1 sound. ed. 2 of 5 + 2 Aps. © Smoking Dogs Films; Courtesy Lisson Gallery



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The Contemporary Art Society acquires works by John Akomfrah and Kader Attia at Frieze London addressing themes of colonisation and migration

The two moving image works will be donated to Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art

The Contemporary Art Society has acquired two moving image works by **John Akomfrah** and **Kader Attia** at Frieze London for Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, addressing themes of colonisation and migration. The museum seeks to play a civic role through a focus on education and community building, and these topics resonate with the diverse constituencies it serves, which include the highest number of asylum seekers in the country per head of population*.

Peripeteia, 2012, by John Akomfrah, and *Dispossession*, 2013, by Kader Attia were purchased through the Contemporary Art Society's Collections Fund, which was set up in 2012 and this year is working in partnership with Frieze London. This

scheme supports the acquisition of significant contemporary works for Contemporary Art Society museum members across the UK. It aims to draw together the knowledge, experience, and expertise of private collectors with that of museum curators.

John Akomfrah, *Peripeteia*, 2012 is the first part of a proposed trilogy that looks at the traces, appearances and disappearances of early African life in Europe. The film imagines the lives of the subjects of two sensitive portraits drawn by Albrecht Dürer in the 16th Century. Some of the earliest depictions of African individuals in Western art, their stories are now "lost to the winds of history" and it is a meditation on diaspora and the realities of an imagined promised land.

This work was acquired from Lisson Gallery.

Kader Attia, *Dispossession*, 2013 is an installation that examines the role of Christian missionaries in the colonisation of African cultures. The Vatican has a collection of over 80,000 African artefacts brought back to Europe by missionaries during the colonial era. These objects are presented as slides alongside a video series of four interviews conducted between Attia, an anthropologist, an art historian, a priest and a lawyer. The subject of repatriation is central to the installation as it considers the political and psychoanalytical questions that arise from the collecting of these objects.

This work was acquired from Lehmann Maupin.

Caroline Douglas, Director, Contemporary Art Society, said: *"I am delighted that we have been able to acquire two works that from quite different viewpoints address Europe's historical relationship with the African continent – its people and cultures. These are topics of enormous political and social relevance today and it is particularly pertinent to place these works into Middlesbrough's collection. The first Collections Fund purchase saw Simon Fujiwara tackling the 2011 London riots, the acquisition of Hito Steyerl's Abstract in 2015 addressed the globalisation of warfare and now with these two works, the scheme is building a strong track record in acquiring work that explores the key issues of our time."*

Alistair Hudson, Director, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, said: *"In austere times it is becoming increasingly difficult for museums to add to their collections and this award enables us to make sure our collection continues to talk to our communities and the challenges we face. In line with our new vision, it is vital that we are able to respond to current urgencies, both local and global. These two works don't just reflect the history that has formed our current culture; they can be used actively, as tools, in our work towards social change. The selection process with the Collections Fund Committee has been a real pleasure; given the subject at hand, it has been undertaken with great sensitivity and thoughtfulness, reflected in the two works acquired here."*

Jo Stella-Sawicka, Artistic Director, Frieze Fairs (Europe, Middle East, Russia & Africa) said: *"The CAS Collections Fund at Frieze is an innovative way to support institutions across the UK. Achieving not only one, but two ambitious acquisitions of work by leading international artists; John Akomfrah and Kader Attia, is a testimony to the exacting vision of the CAS and the unique partnership between Frieze, CAS patrons and Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art. For two leading galleries participating at Frieze to have been a part of this is exciting for me, and an honour for Frieze Art Fair."*

The two works will be presented at Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art during spring and summer 2017 as part of the museum repositioning of its collection at the core of the programme. They will be part of seasons engaging with identity politics, the migratory condition, the legacy of neo-liberalism today, and the responsibility of art towards society.