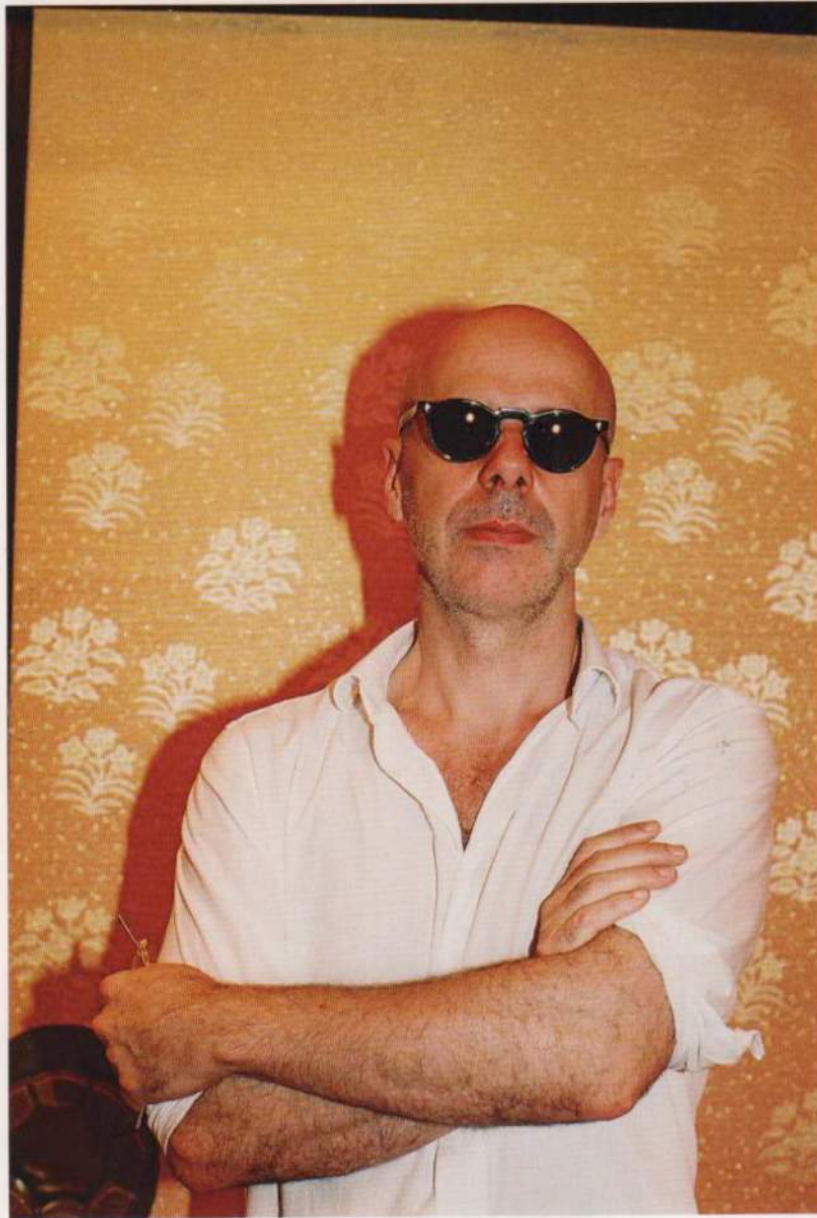


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E-studio Luanda *African Industrial Revolution*

Tiwani Contemporary, London 10 July–15 August

E-studio Luanda is a studio complex and collective set up in the Angolan capital in 2012 by four artists – although for their first London show, *African Industrial Revolution*, it's just two of the group exhibiting: Rita GT and Francisco Vidal. Perhaps that explains why the 'e-' aspect of their practice doesn't seem very prominent here. Sure, the show's subtitle promises that 'the revolution will be downloadable', and the exhibition partly takes the form of a website containing various slogans, sketchbook images and videos. Yet viewing their work online is far less intense or interesting than experiencing what they do in the gallery environment. Much of the pair's ethos involves physically occupying the space: they ran an 'open studio' for the show's first ten days, a sort of performance-residency where they produced work *in situ*, with the accoutrements from Rita GT's performances – decorated clothes she designates *Wearable Paintings* (all works 2015) and clay balls derived from the Chokwe people's religion – remaining on display. And although her image-based work, by comparison, certainly uses the Internet as a source, the resulting mashups feel more incisive, or less cursory, when printed in the form of physical posters and superimposed against Vidal's vast, chaotic, immersive installation.

It is, indeed, Vidal's enormous, overlapping grids of paper, painted as the show developed

in delirious patterns or bright blocks of colour, that dominate the gallery, covering virtually all of the walls and much of the floor. The square sheets are handmade, giving them a rough, wadded appearance, while the papermaking screens themselves are stacked into a sort of impromptu sculpture in one corner. In the centre of the floor are his *Utopia Machines*: six wooden boxes that function both as signage – the letters on the lids, for instance, spelling out 'utopia' in the gallery window – and as containers for transporting his work and art materials: a sort of toolbox for a peripatetic producer, a mobile workshop for wherever the artist finds himself.

The imagery in Vidal's wall pieces similarly emphasises notions of movement and adaptability, suggesting a confluence of cultural routes. The largest paintings, formed from multiple tessellated sheets, depict black men or vibrant cotton flowers (pre-independence Angola was one of the world's largest cotton producers) and are all titled *If I'm free, it's because I'm always running* – a quote from Jimi Hendrix. Meanwhile, arrayed around the margins are numerous smaller, single sheets, monochrome ink drawings portraying hundreds of influential or inspirational figures, both black and white – a litany of artists, writers, musicians and African politicians – together with portraits

of many of the gallery visitors to the show's open-studio phase.

GT's work, by comparison, is less effusive, more ironic. Chiming with recent, post-Internet discourse – marking the point where post-Internet meets postcolonial, perhaps – her posters take episodes of racial stereotyping or cultural appropriation and filter them through digital formats. Screengrabs of online images of bananas, Google search results for African masks, anthropological photographs, computer glyphs, Photoshop scribbles, clipart of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907) – the elements overlap or float vacantly about each other, their lack of affect unsettling. Only the final addition of a pink spraypainted exclamation mark, as if to highlight the virtual world's proliferation of imagery, feels rather overstated.

Both artists, significantly, share one motif: the colour spectrum – whether the slick Photoshop gradients in GT's prints or Vidal's rainbowlike sections that progress across the walls. There's a racial allegory to be drawn, perhaps, from these continua of colours. But beyond that, the shifting hues also suggest a deeper organisational principle: a lack of hierarchy, a limitless equivalence between potential locations. The Internet, it seems, isn't such a bad metaphor for e-studio Luanda's practice after all. *Gabriel Coxhead*



African Industrial Revolution, 2015 (installation view).
Photo: Sylvain Deleu. Courtesy Tiwani Contemporary, London