

SIGHT LINES

PETER SELLARS

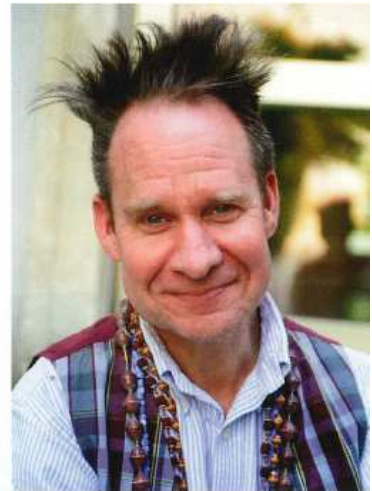


1

SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

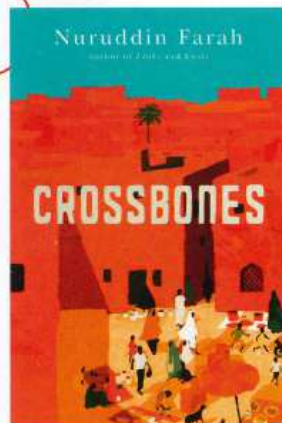
There've been multiple coups in Mali recently, and in the north right now an extreme Islamic sect is busy smashing the sacred sites of Timbuktu. Rokia Traoré, a Malian singer, songwriter and musician, came back to Bamako as everything was exploding. We collaborated on a piece called *Desdemona*, an "answer" to *Othello* with Rokia's music and a text by Toni Morrison. It's Shakespeare's story 400 years later—a call to stop a tragedy in progress, and an insistence on moving forward.

Left, Rokia Traoré (with guitar), in *Desdemona*, at the Barbican, London, 2012.



Theater director and UCLA professor Peter Sellars is always juggling multiple projects, but when *A.i.A.* caught up with the globetrotting wizard this summer, he had one thing on his mind: "I'm Africa-obsessed at the moment." Indeed, most of his thoughts were directed toward the people and political situations of the world's second-largest continent. While taking a brief time-out at his home in Los Angeles, Sellars elaborated on some of his favorite artists, writers and activists.

2



PIRACY

I'm in the middle of *Crossbones*, Nuruddin Farah's new novel. He's a Somali writer, living in exile in South Africa. The book addresses the pirate phenomenon and the total ecology of the country. It's fiction but brilliantly researched. I haven't worked with Nuruddin. Yet.

3



BEAUTIFUL DETRITUS

In 2009 I curated an Elias Sime retrospective with Meskerem Assegued for the Santa Monica Museum of Art, and it recently closed in Grand Forks, N.D. Sime is a completely protean artist from Ethiopia with an amazing body of work. He just started a new series of large ants made of copper wire set atop pieces of mirror. I have an idea to cover the courtyard of the Hirshhorn Museum in D.C. with swarms of Elias's colorful, oversize ants.

Above, Elias Sime, *What is Love—1*, 2007, yarn and bottlecaps on canvas, 74 by 52 inches.

INTERVIEW BY CHRIS CHANG

4

BREAKING BREAD

Bread! KC is a great project I learned about when I met Sean Starowitz, one of its founders, in Kansas City last month. The collective cooks a big organic feast and charges each person \$10. During the meal several artists present their work, everybody in attendance votes, and the proceeds go to the winning artist. They're creating and sustaining a scene in an emerging zone of midwestern coolness.

Below, an outdoor Bread! KC event, May 2012.



5



PERFORMANCE POLITICS

Faustin Linyekula is an activist, choreographer and performance artist from Kisangani, in Eastern Congo—one of the world's more recent genocide locations. The region has 80 percent of our planet's coltan, a conductor found in every cell phone, so the stakes are high. Faustin is performing a new solo piece, *Le Cargo*, at the French Institute's Crossing the Line festival in New York [Sept. 17-18], and the two of us are also participating in a public conversation about art's capacity to promote social change.

Above, Faustin Linyekula's performance *more more . . . future*, 2011, at the Kitchen, New York.