

In Africa, a combination of cultural and religious practices, repressive laws instituted during the colonial period, and homophobic nationalisms have ensured that individuals who identify as queer experience their difference in private spaces and at the margins of societies. African people who identify as queer navigate different forms of social silence and this has an important impact on how they toggle between invisibility and visibility and ultimately how they experience embodiment and relationality. Given such a situation, Gibson Ncube explores queer lived experiences in Africa through the lens of the body in films. The body in films is a powerful model for understanding the complexities of identity, desire, and gender within diverse African communities. By examining how queer individuals navigate their physical selves in relation to societal norms, it is possible to gain insight into the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, and cultural contexts. Drawing mainly on the work Ncube did in the book *Queer Bodies in African Films* (2022), he contends that the filmed body as a model serves as a canvas upon which societal expectations and personal expressions of gender and sexual identities collide. By zooming in on the body, Ncube is interested in how the filmed queer body is invested with multiple and often intersecting discourses and narratives. It is inscribed with more than just desire, eroticism, and sexuality. It is as a disruptive figure whose materiality calls for a rethinking not just of how gender and sexual identities are performed and staged but also how they are constructed and embodied. Thus, considering the body as a model allows for a rich understanding of the multifaceted tapestry of queer lived experiences in Africa.

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**Lecture Series Models:** A model can be an object of admiration, a miniature or a prototype, an abstracted phenomenon or applied theory, a literary text — practically anything from a human body on a catwalk to a mathematical description of a system. It can elicit desire, provide understanding, guide action or thought. Despite the polysemy of the term, models across disciplines and fields share a fundamental characteristic: their effect depends on a specific relational quality. A model is always a model of or for something else, and the relation is reductive insofar as it is selective and considers only certain aspects of both object and model. Critical discussions of models often revolve around their restrictive function. And yet models are less prescriptive and more ambiguous than codified rules or norms. What is the critical purchase of models and how does their generative potential relate to their constitutive reduction? What are the stakes in decreasing or increasing, altering or proliferating the reductiveness of models? How can one work with and on models in a creative, productive manner without disavowing power asymmetries and their exclusionary or limiting effects?

# Gibson Ncube

## The Filmed Body

### as a Model of Understanding African Queer Lived Experiences

