

ARTSKOP³⁴⁻³⁷

Art Market Fairs News

I-54 Contemporary African Art Fair on the French Art Market

Cindy Sissokho / 2021-01-18

5 minutes read



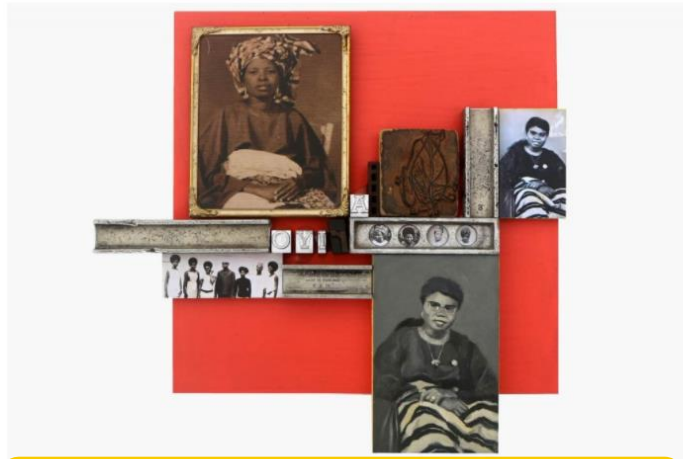
Roméo Mivekannin Le Village Sénégalais à la Porte Maillot 2020 acrylique et bain d'elixir sur toile libre 313 x 271 cm. © Galerie Cécile Fakhoury.

As per every February, **1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair** should have taken place in Marrakesh. Due to the current pandemic circumstances, the fair exceeds itself and presents a hybrid format – for the first time at **Christie's Paris**, opening for VIPS from the **18th January**, and for all public online (www.christies.com) from **20th to the 23rd January 2021**.

Under strict safety measures, the fair that specialises in contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora will be opening its doors to a French audience.

"Following the postponement of the Marrakesh edition due to Covid regulations, we were formulating ideas for how we could still support our galleries and artists in this extremely challenging time. We realised we would have to move beyond our established model and take advantage of an opportunity offered to us by Christie's Paris. So, this is a unique edition born out of the exceptional circumstances."^[1]

She offers space for **21 internationally renowned galleries**, mainly from the African continent and Europe, including **68 artists** by: **Galleria Continua, Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Luce Gallery, Nil Gallery, Gallery 1957, This Is Not A White Cube, Galerie MAGNIN-A et Galerie Lelong & Co**, among others.

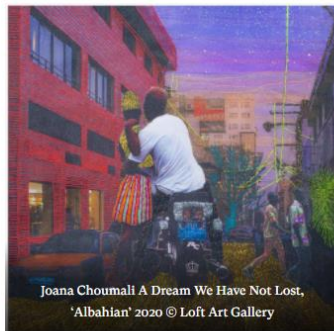


Kelani Abass Scrap of Evidence (Ariyo) 2020 Mixed media on wood (Letterpress type, oil on canvas, digital print, ancient frame, rubber block) 34 x 37 cm © Courtesy 31 Project

This time, the exhibition programme will have a strong international audience as it will be fully available online on the Christie's website, allowing for a wider opportunity to sell and deliver artworks around the world.

"More than ever, we are dedicated to platforming contemporary artists from Africa and its diaspora, challenging the misconceptions laid upon artists from the continent by Western-based cultural institutions and encouraging sustainable and engaged collecting practices by all. For now, we are just doing this on a smaller scale and more adaptable format."^[2]

1-54 wants to be a platform hosting plural narratives by demonstrating a diversity of identities. Visitors will have the opportunity to discover or rediscover the works of **Marie-Claire Messouma Manlanbien** at the **50 Golborne**. Her work presents a cultural syncretism of her identity between France, Guadeloupe and Ivory Coast. She presents hybrid representations of rituals and cultures, within her mixed media installations from textile to wood and copper to clay. There will be a key contribution from the Casablanca-based **Loft Art Gallery** that will be presenting the eclectic photographer **Mous Lamrabet**, the documentary photographer **M'hammed Kilito** and the visual artist and photographer **Joana Choumali**.



Joana Choumali A Dream We Have Not Lost, 'Albahian' 2020 © Loft Art Gallery



M'hammed Kilito Tilla. "Among you" 2018-2019 Photography

The latter depicts the African world that surrounds her daily, through photography; during her travels or from local scenes in her hometown, Abidjan, in Ivory Coast where she currently lives. Her photographic explorations further come to life with the use of colourful sewing on the print itself. A sewing element that has become a key meditative process in the production of her work.



Nú Barreto Baillleurs Pro-Fonds (États Désunis d'Afrique) 2018 Acrylic on canvas, structure (3 wooden poles) 270 x 200 x 100 cm © Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Not to be missed is the presentation by Nú Barreto at the **Nathalie Obadia Gallery**. The artist puts an accent on the continent with a focus on the denunciation of striking inequality, discrimination and oppressive systems that are deeply inscribed. He does so through drawings, paintings and video works – an urgent practice which offers a critical stance on current politics.

Finally, another important stop is to be made to the **Cécile Fakhoury Gallery** to see the presentation of visual artist **Roméo Mivekannin** who closely works with ethnographic photography and classical paintings from the 19th century – a key historical period in the articulation of a discourse on otherness in the dehumanising context of the slave trade and ravaging colonialism. His acrylic on *bain d'elixir* canvas strongly relate to two popular mediums capturing the black body, echoing very much with yesterday and today's ongoing representations.

In parallel to the exhibitions, it is within the online **Forum 1-54** that Morocco remains present. The programme **Crafting worl[ld]s: for a vernacular economy of art**, is curated by **Le 18**, an “independent platform of creation, dissemination and cultural and artistic exchanges based in Marrakesh”^[1] which will be broadcasted from their space during the fair and throughout February.



Moataz Nasr The Petro Beads 2014 34 gas containers, metal Ed. 1 + 1 AP site specific dimensions © Galeria Continua

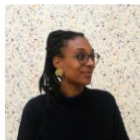
The discursive platform is fundamental in contextualising artistic, cultural, political and social discourses about the contemporary African scene, orchestrated with and by its main actors. The programme will be focusing on the theme of resonance, as they “propose to look at the ways in which new ecologies of cultural practices are emerging, drawing from vernacular principles and circular dynamics.” [2]

It will include long-term collaborators invited by Le 18 and their “proposal unfolds along seemingly diverging, and yet converging and intersecting lines, to explore some of the material and immaterial sites and infrastructures of cultural and economic production, reproduction and circulation, by establishing a protocol of diffused curatorship for each knot composing our canvas.” [3] For this unique edition, the 1-54 temporarily settle in the French cultural landscape, echoing the fair *Akaa (Also Known As Africa)* and coinciding with the *AFRICA 2020* season (now 2021), among others – initiatives that are most necessary for the visibility of African artistic and cultural discourses in France

[1] [2] Quote taken from an email conversation with Touria El Glaoui, Founding Director of 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair.

[3] This quote was taken from the Le 18 website, available at <https://le18marrakech.com/about/>

[4] [5] This quote was taken from the fair's website, available at <https://www.1-54.com/paris/1-54-forum/>



Cindy Sissokho

Cindy Sissokho is a cultural producer, curator and writer with a specific interest in intellectual, political and artistic aspects of decoloniality within the arts and ‘feminist’ movements. Her work is nurtured by her passion for the dissemination of epistemologies and new cultural production from the Global South. She currently works as a Curator and Cultural Producer at the New Art Exchange in Nottingham (UK).