

BENDING CULTURE

Inside Out, Understanding Iconoclasm in an Era of Multiculturalism

Exhibition: 22 - 25 October 2020

Preview: 21 October 2020 - extended viewing between 2-8 pm

Location: HOXTON 253 art project space

In celebration of Black History Month in the UK, [HOXTON 253](#) and [Demif Gallery](#) are proud to present *Bending Culture*.

Bending Culture is a group exhibition by eleven artists from Africa and those in the diaspora who are all exploring their direct and indirect impact on their surroundings.

The exhibition follows a journey of individuals who are questioning daily activities in an iconoclastic manner, which in result alternates the perception of reality.

The questions asked by these artists surrounds topics such as multiculturalism, identity, gender and blackness. The exhibition explores how these artists are creating an environment to express a different discourse and a space for dialogue and understanding.

As the world becomes more interconnected, questions about identity, multiculturalism and institutionalism are becoming the forefront of various discussions. Cherished beliefs and institutions or established values, practices and images are criticised or assertively rejected.

Issues such as racism in the light of the murder of George Floyd have resonate globally and has open debates about what it means to be black and how blackness interacts with its surroundings.

Regarding the latter, one element that is often overlooked in these discussions is the fact that these topics and issues have always been present. It has been contemporaneous from small acts like writing poems to global demonstrations.

In this exhibition, the focus will be on how African artists and those in the diaspora have been questioning various topics that relates to their identity and how they are contributing to a cultural shift in terms of understanding and appreciation. The exposition explores experiences of artists in Africa, their experiences, the beauty and challenges of their surrounding and what their deep-seated thoughts are and what actions they are taking in order to impact their environment.

Aside from this, the show also focuses on artists living in the wider diaspora and the exhibition will highlight their journey to integration in a multicultural society.

HOXTON 253
art project space

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253 Hoxton Street, London, N1 5LG

DEMIF GALLERY

<https://demifgallery.com/>
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NOTES TO EDITORS

Visitor Information

Title: *BENDING CULTURE*
Address: HOXTON 253 art project space, 253 Hoxton Street, London, N15LG
Website: www.hoxton253.com
Dates: 22 – 25 October 2020
Opening: 12-8pm

Instagram: @hoxton253_artprojectspace
@demif_gallery

In light of the new government announcements and to guarantee everyone's safety, please RSVP via the website. Each booking allows you up to 30 min in the space with only 15 people maximum in attendance.

General enquiries:
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For press information, images and sales please contact:
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Zsuzsa Benke zsuzsa@hoxton253.com

About HOXTON 253

HOXTON 253 is an artist-run gallery and project space, providing a cultural event space in the heart of Hoxton. “Our aim is to use art to act as a cultural bridge between national and international artists as well as within the local community. We run a diverse program of exhibitions, experimental projects, workshops, events and screenings. Through our community outreach projects we also aim to provide culturally valuable creative activities to both the younger and older generations. We nurture local, national and international creative talents, provide accessible exhibition space, and build a community of artists and visitors with the objective to provoke critical dialogue within contemporary culture and society. Our doors are open to all, and for the purpose of accessibility our programs are primarily free of charge.”

About Demif Gallery

Demif Gallery is an online art gallery built with passion dedicated to art lovers and collectors. Our mission is to promote cultural diversity and young minority ethnic artists, with a special focus on Contemporary African art. We sell artwork from the cream of the crop of emerging talent and young artists from the UK and around the world. As well as being an online gallery, Demif Gallery also commissions art, organises and runs pop up art exhibitions and takes part in national and international art fairs.

About the Curator

Zsuzsa Benke is the co-founder and director of HOXTON 253 art project space. The multidisciplinary artist and gallerist passion lies in creating environments that critically provokes dialogues about our communal and individual responsibilities in regards of our societal and political position in the world. HOXTON 253 has only been founded less than two years ago, but has already proven to be a valuable platform to artist including those with non-commercial focus. Benke has scripted a strong ecological focus in the gallery programme, while she has collaborated on, produced and co-curated nearly 50 events within the short period of the existence of the project space. As part of the HOXTON 253 Black History Month programme, she is delighted to be collaborating with Demif Gallery, to co-curate and host the first of an extensive exhibition series that support emerging and mid-career artists of African origin.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Frank Dikisongele

Born and raised in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Frank Dikisongele Zatumua is a painter and teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kinshasa.

The work of the artist is marked by a touch of bright colours. Dikisongele synthesizes through his palette, major social concerns, strongly internalised personally, which appear in the form of an interpellation to humanity. The mystery of time can be seen in his works through signs, masks to the clock. The latter exalted in his paintings represents the fleeting aspect of time. He advocates the advent of the time of peace and a new era of a better world. These epicurean ideas develop in his search for new expressions to accomplish his task of conditioning minds. Dikisongele's painting is an implosion of inner feelings; feelings of anguish, uncertainty, a little close to revolt. Armed with his brush, the artist rebels against the current situation of his country; a situation made of troubles and mismanagement of public affairs amongst other factors. Dikisongele's painting challenges society to take into account the passage of time.

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Angela Franklin

With a BA in Art from Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio and her MFA from Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, Angela Franklin-Faye has exhibited her works throughout the US and internationally.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio she has lived abroad since 1997, dividing her time between Senegal and the United Arab Emirates since 2007. This international experience has resulted in a body of work that encourages her to chronicle the experiences of people from the diaspora worldwide.

Her works are currently on exhibition at the foundation Blachere in France from May 23-November 17, 2019. Other past exhibitions include the May 2018 national exhibition of Contemporary African Art for the 13th DAK'Art Biennale, along with the Dialogue in Black and White Exhibition at the Charleston City Gallery. In addition, Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, The Art Hub-Abu Dhabi, The Renwick Gallery - Smithsonian Institution, Ohio Craft Museum and Musee Boribana - Dakar are just a few of the spaces that have featured her work. Works by Franklin-Faye are in the corporate collections of Atlanta Life Insurance Company, The NationsBank, Arco Chemical and Household Finance.

In 2013, she earned a second Master Degree in Online Education and Leadership Management and credits this with having an even greater impact on her artwork. She is the owner of Chez Alpha Books - a bookstore and academic resource centre in Dakar, Senegal

Christian Kakesse

Kakesse is a designer and fine artist who lives and works in Kinshasa, DR Congo. He was born in 1986. Growing up, he reproduced traditional patterns of banknote, postage and movie posters. His surroundings acknowledged his immense talent and encouraged him to pursue his artistic studies at the Academy of Arts in Kinshasa. He studied painting and visual communication and graduated from the art school in 2011.

After his studies, Christian travelled to China where he was exposed to a new culture and a vibrant artistic scene. Aside from discovering China, he also managed to finish his masters in graphic design at Nanjing University in 2019. Kakesse's body of work focuses on his personal stories, journeys and his relationship with topics such as environment, immigration, exposure to different cultures, media, fashion, traditions and representation of the African identity.

Contrary to his contemporaries, who have been travelling to the West to learn Western aesthetic, art and history, Kakesse brings a fresh approach to globalization through his enhanced communication and insight into Asian culture. At the same time, he embraces new directions and influences of political, cultural and social changes in his home country of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kakesse's body of work is characterized by its bright and warm colours, traditional African figures and elements of post-avant-garde and Pop Art, which give his composition a robust structure and finish.

Claudy Khan

With an African (DR of Congo), European (Belgium) and American (Brazil) background, Claudy Khan is a modern and contemporary African artist.

Trained visual artist from the Fine Art school of Kinshasa (1974-1978) and architect from School of Architecture of Nantes (1979-1984), his rich and varied cultural heritage is reflected in his work and felt in his artistic quest that remains motley, multi-faceted and even suprasensible.

His painting was classical at first, but now he inserts abstract elements and other abstraction components. In fact, he explores everything: the resonances of the past, the future and the unknown towards which we walk.

His artistic approach has only one constraint, that of being as original as possible, responding to spontaneous inspiration, and never merely slavishly copying existing work which puts him in a perpetual quest for more and more research.

Today, his work is the result of a dozen different styles, which he has explored and mastered. Making him one of the most interesting Modern and contemporary African artists that is well ahead of his time.

Pitsho Mafolo

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1977, Pitsho Mafolo's work depicts questions about the relativity between cultural identity and human behaviour. He questions cultural identity crises and the historical heritage of human societies, with a particular emphasis on African culture.

Fragments of bodies half man and half animal often appear in his painting, which tell the realities of an African culture fragmented by foreign hegemony.

Open-minded, Mafolo does not hesitate to experiment with new styles and techniques after research or during new artistic encounters which results are reflected, moreover, by the energy that emerges in his works.

In practice, his techniques usually involve a collage of golden leaves, printed images, acrylic but also oil paint and unfinished lines on a canvas. These unfinished lines, according to Mafolo, evoke an infinite world but also as a self-reminder that artistically, he has not arrived yet.

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Mafolo's work is included in the permanent collections of UNESCO collection (France), Rotary Club Collection (Kinshasa), Shell Collection (Kinshasa), King of Jordan private Collection and the D.R. Congolese presidential collection.

Coco M. Mangbanzo

Born in 1974 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Coco Mobuli lives and works in Kinshasa.

An admirer of realistic painting in his formative years, Mobuli began to alter his artworks in order to convey messages of beauty, freedom and hope.

Speaking through his work, he aims to embolden deep-seated thoughts about the richness and the diversity of life and culture. There is a profound avowal being made about society's ability to disregard the breath-taking beauty of the world around us. The sensibility of subversive colour coding and the energetic abstraction celebrating life is what makes Mobuli's body of work intriguing. Through his body of work he intends to capture the viewers' thoughts and provide an alternative narrative of what constructs the ideals of beauty.

Aza Mansongi

Mansongi was born and raised in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Academie des Beaux arts de Kinshasa, the Fine Art school of Kinshasa.

She is now based in Douala in Cameroon and she has exhibited extensively through group and solo exhibitions in the DR Congo, South Africa, France, Switzerland and USA.

Alternating between painting and sculpture when she began, today Mansongi loves to use her brush and paints to creatively capture a likeness. Completely inspired by her direct social environment, her painting is primarily the reflection of the vision of her world first then that of the society.

Aesthetically, her painting is a mix of abstract character with bright colours and the particularly noticeable presence of strong lines. She usually calls her painting, in her own words: "The dance of lines".

Mansongi's work is included in several private collections in Africa and the world.

Olivier Matuti

Matuti known as one of the leaders of the Librisme revolution, an artistic philosophy developed by a group of young artists in Kinshasa around 1997 is a German trained fine artist. He left his home country The Democratic Republic of Congo around 1998. His work is aesthetically African-inspired and is characterised by a great variety of bright colours. Despite the strong connection with the culture of his homeland that can be easily noted from his often-large-scale paintings, Olivier Matuti also likes to add the influence of the world around him in his artwork, carefully analysing the different values and then interpreting them artistically. The mostly figurative representations are often alienated in the manner of the abstract painting style.

Defining himself as an artist without any artistic connotation, Olivier Matuti's artistic approach is based first on the observation of his environment, the evolution of his life and his everyday life. This explains why when he stands in front of his canvas, all these elements explode through his magic brushes and his use of colour.

Maurice Mbikayi

Mbikayi was born in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. He currently lives and works in South Africa. In 2000 he graduated with a BA in Graphic Design (Advertising and Visual Communication), from the Academies des Beaux Arts in Kinshasa. He completed his Master of Fine Art degree (with distinction) in 2015 at the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

Mbikayi was selected as one of the finalists of the Luxembourg Art Prize in 2016 and was selected as a core participant in the 'Between the Lines' symposium in 2013, an exchange between Michaelis and the Braunschweig University of Art in Germany. He also took part in the Spier Contemporary 2010 biennale presented by the Africa Centre in Cape Town and the Holland Creative Exchange program of 2010-2011. In 2010, he was selected by the Alliance Française for a travelling solo exhibition in South Africa, Swaziland and Mozambique. He was awarded a three-month residency at IAAB in Basel, Switzerland by Pro Helvetia South Africa.

He is a member of the Africa South Art Initiative (ASAI) and the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA). Mbikayi's work is included in the permanent collections of Iziko South African National Gallery, the Scheryn Art Collection, Progressive Art Collection, and Yellowwoods Art.

Ley Mboramwe

Mboramwe hails from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He completed his degree in fine art at the 'Academie des Beaux - Arts' in (Kinshasa). His life experiences in the Congo, its suffering, beauty, politics, culture and economic circumstances is evident in his work.

Through his work, he tries to convey rhythm, emotion and freedom of the human spirit. His silhouetted figures are not

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only a representation of the physical self, but rather an amalgamation of flesh and spirit. The spirit as something in search of an original rock painting. Painting that for him represents a time when a man was true and whole. It is also because of this, he sees his work as a bridge between spirit and earth.

The human body is used as a means of storytelling and a reflection of life, where stories, such as looting, hunger, disease, nightmares, dream and the joys of human existence are theoretically portrayed.

Ley Mboramwe attempts to transfigure flesh into spirit, flesh into the depths of human suffering and happiness, flesh into the inner beauty and despairs of human life. He uses the body as a mirror to the soul.

Stanis E. Mbwanga

Born in Democratic Republic of Congo in 1982, Stanis is a fine artist who lives and works in Kinshasa. He is a lecturer in the department of ceramic in the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts.

Stanis Mbwanga focuses his work on the search for codes that can exhume, question and show the direct links between the good economic health of some multinationals and wars repetition. It mainly targets the one operating in the sector of new information and communication technologies that sprinkle blood through the wars that have been provoked to extract the raw materials like Colombo tantalite (Coltan) in the East of his country, the oil in Libya, Iraq or natural gas in Syria.

Concretely rendering the aforementioned facts, via graphic design and the set of materials present in his work, elements not taken at random, he deals with the major economic issues of today and the misdeeds of technological advance. Sometimes collagist, he uses prepaid cards or motherboards of electronic devices (Mobile phone) to express himself about this highly sensitive subject.

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