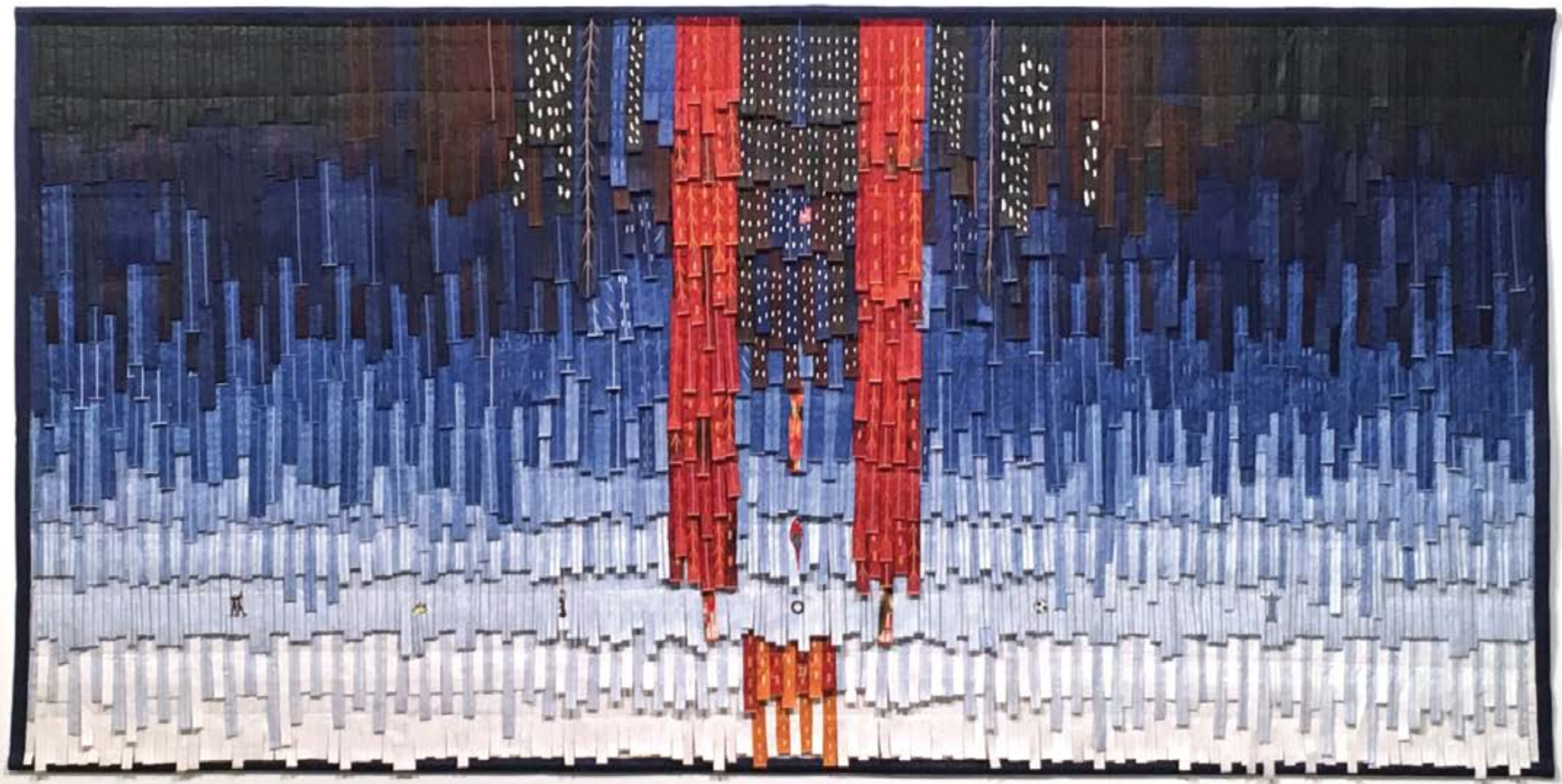


ABDOULAYE KONATÉ



Abdoulaye Konaté, *Brésil (Guarani)*, 2015, installation view from *Viva Arte Viva*, Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venezia, 2017

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The material and the world of Abdoulaye Konaté

Critical essay by Joëlle Busca

Translated by Regina Luisa Sozzi

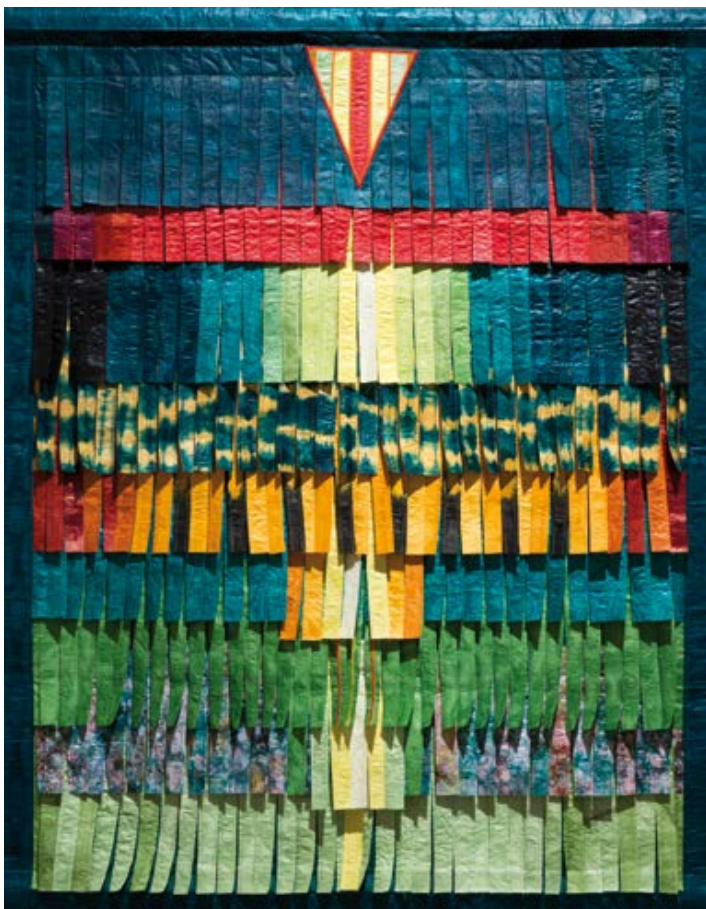
Abdoulaye Konaté was born in 1953 in northern Mali, in Diré. Growing up in an extremely well-educated family, he then graduated at the National Institute of Arts in Bamako (1972-1976). He moved to Cuba to continue his studies (1978-1985) and there he discovers a multidisciplinary school level, le paysage Cubain est très différent du Mali, il est nouveau pour Abdoulayé. Artist committed to providing the best chances for the future of younger generation, in 2002 he creates in Bamako under the patronage of state of Mali, the Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers Multimedia a nome de Ballafasseké Kouyaté which represents the conceptual result of both the ISA (in Cuba) and Fresnoy National Studio of Contemporary Arts (in Tourcoing). This school is provided with significant technical facilities, with a competent teaching staff and with a program of workshops led by artists and guest teachers.

A humanism embodied in a philosophy of active transmission underlies his role of artist, educator and administrator and it oversees the development of this educational project which represent the base of artistic education in Africa. This multidisciplinary school is widely open to a global artistic creation. It promotes the emergence of non-modeled artistic identities and intercultural and intergenerational debate.

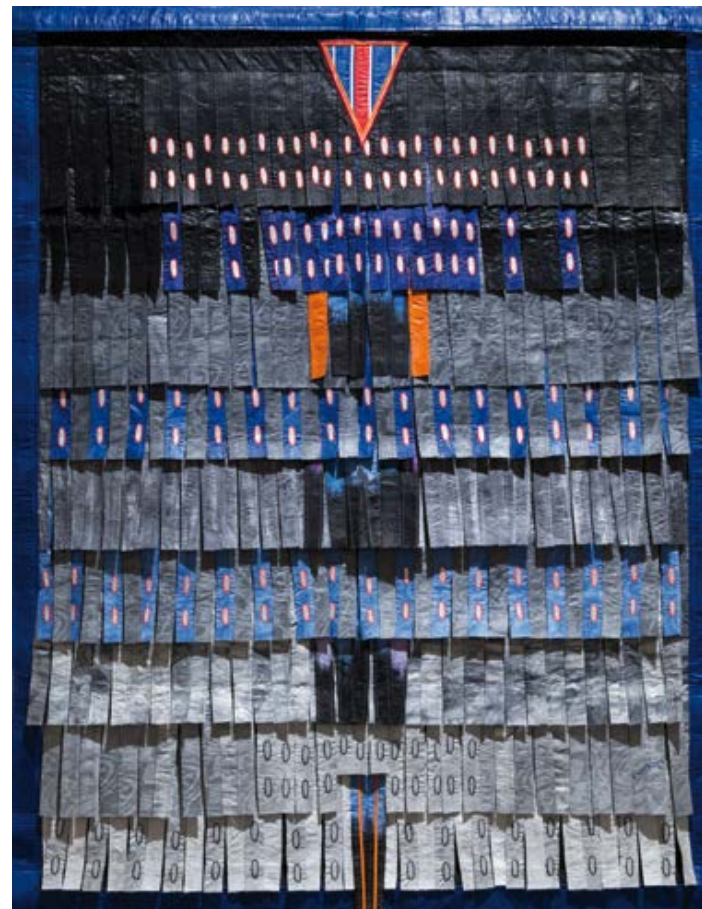
Influences - Tradition

On his return from Havana, he pledged a new artistic and intellectual experience, he finds his familiar environment. He paints a large production of artworks on acrylic on paper, creating abstract and colorful signs and symbols relating to his origins. Attached to the classic graphic signs he explores cults and cosmological descriptions of the Malian societies, mainly ciwara or amulets.

The Ciwara is the head of the beast of the culture, the zoomorphic crest whose elegant lines evoke a graceful antelope ripple, it epitomizes the universe within a sculpture and it inspires a wide variation of figures. In some



Composition verte au triangle (bande rouge)
2017, textile, 151 x 116 cm



Composition en gris bleu (triangle)
2017, textile, 151 x 115 cm

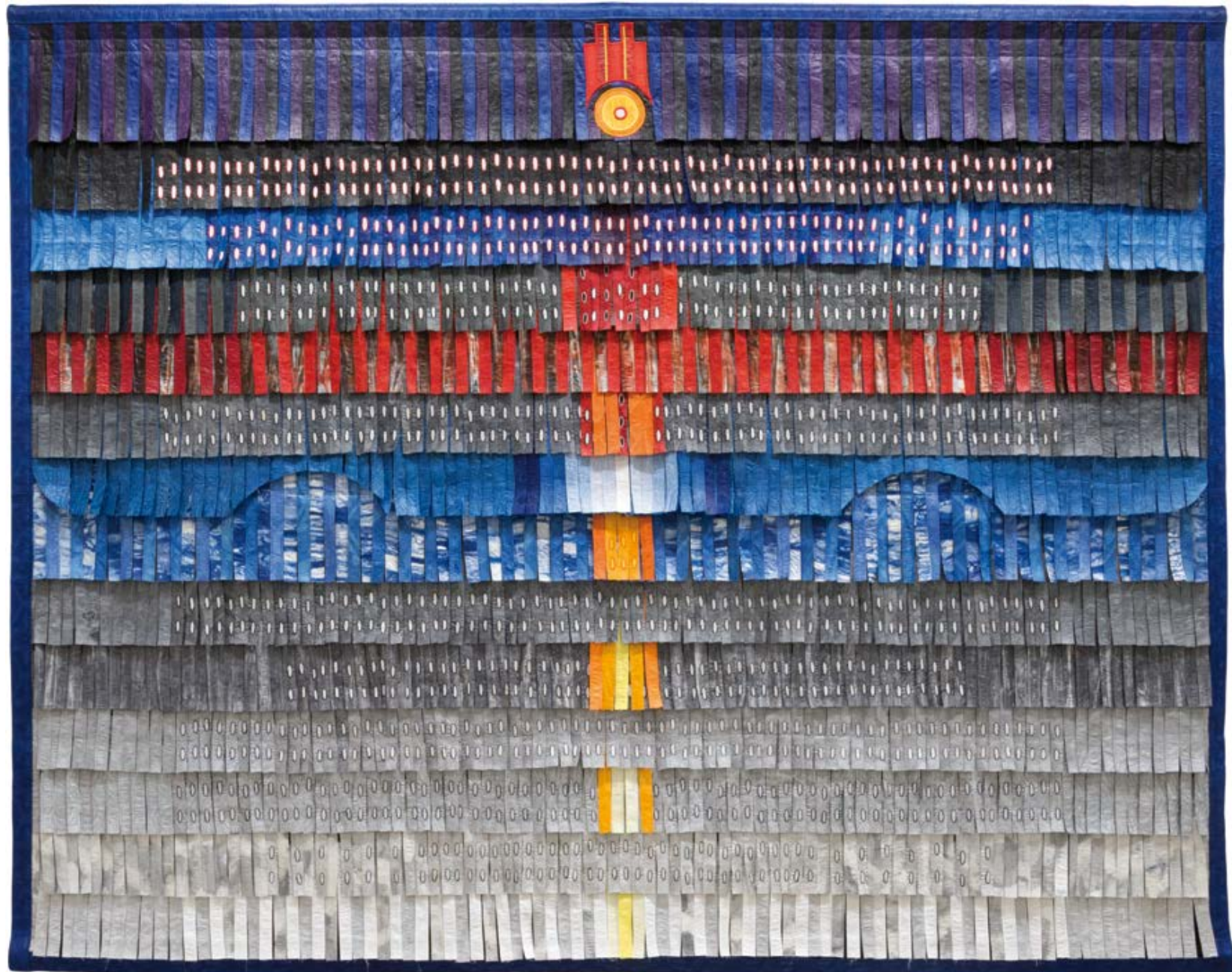
gouaches he made in 1987, the human figure has been fragmented into profiles reshaping the Ciwara through which the Bamanas celebrate the mythical union of the sun with the earth and they worship the sacred values of agrarian fertility, the visual result is a combination of the cubist portraits of Wifredo Lam and other more realistic figures. He kept in his mind the lessons of cannibalism from his Cuban masters, influenced by the Cannibal Manifesto Brazilian Oswald de Andrade (1928), the mixed-race theories that combines Marxism, psychoanalysis and surrealism and other African disparate components: points, triangles, abstractions masks and riot of color. A Caribbean exuberance is thus faced with the Fulani austerity and Sahelian landscape.

Abdoulaye Konaté plays the mystery and ritual of the Komo colors - red, black and white - those of the animal sacrifice and of religious ceremonies. Guinea fowl feathers, ropes, cotton threads, amulets, knots complete the evocation of a border area between the ordinary secular and the supernatural, where men attempt to acquire their autonomy from social and material constraints by subterfuge, but also they try to free themselves of spiritual entities. The series *Formes et couleurs des gris-gris* refers to an ancient pictorial semiotics, signifier and signified, without a religious content. In *Komo 3*, the whiteness comes out of the animal killed as the victory of the ruth, here the open mouth symbolizes the thought. The music provides him with crowds of birds like musical instruments, surrounded by slender and colorful listeners inspired by Wifredo Lam. He painted plant forests as they were bird-men. He makes a metaphorical substitution where the musician becomes a bird, likewise he poses himself as a musical instrument –musician previously bird and calabash. He calls the legendary calao and a multitude of hybrid beings. Combining magic and reality, the image comes as a happy theatricality, the plant and animal kingdoms are lush up to the point they affect their components to improve their relationship with humans, in a baroque fantasy and in clear interplay between the mental phenomena and a various imaginary.

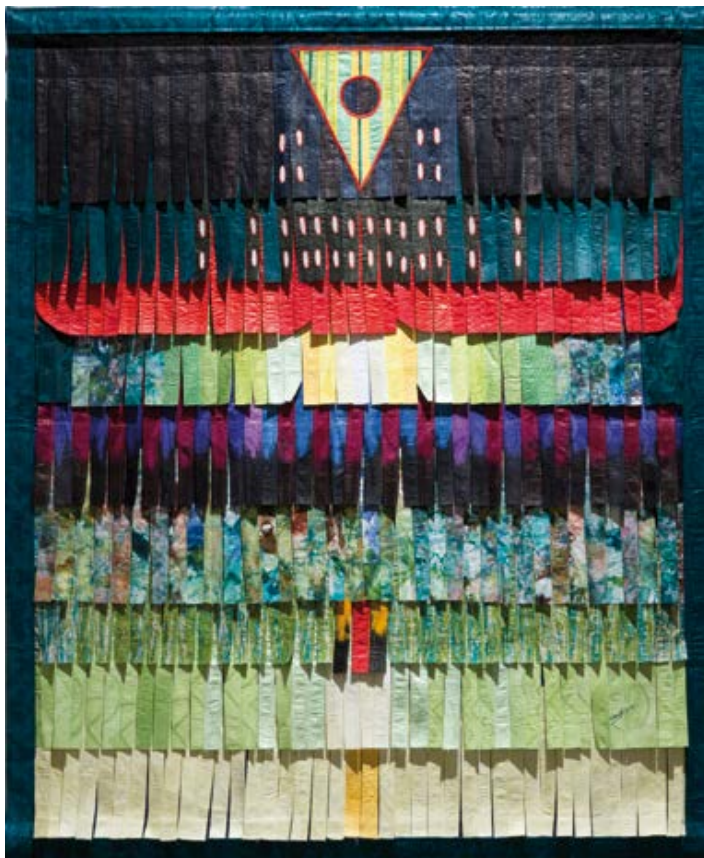
He discovers and he observes paint as a graphic grammar, as a lesson of freedom and respect for the classic stereotypes, Western or not. He is aware of the achievements of the African geometry, of Cubism, of Negritude, of Surrealism, of Occultism, of Chinese philosophy, of the New York avant-garde since the 40's, of the Cobra, of the School of Paris, but all



Jaune-ocre 4AK
2018, textile, 158,5 x 114,5 cm



Composition gris, bleue, rouge et orange
2017, textile,
235 x 293 cm



Composition en vert (triangle et cercle noir)
2017, textile, 151 x 126,5 cm

these aspects t echo his already developed artistic concerns. He's concerned also with the work of Lam for his independent regard to anatomy, for his use of analogy released from the literalness of the quote, the obstinacy of fasteners avowed, the energy exceeded from the formal release and his dynamic compositions.

Supported from rich traditions, an undeniable ability to sublimate aesthetics and soul having already made a certain number of back and fourth, Abdoulaye Konaté has chosen a resonance that caters to both the painter and the African, he rallied an historical continuity, continental, pictorial, ethical and stylistic. This marriage of ancient spirituality and rationality of modern art features a dialectical side of his most exciting work. On the occasion of the Universal Exposition in 1998, the city of Lisbon plans a new Metro station. The promoters have invited ten artists from various countries to create a permanent mural ceramic installation under the unifying theme of the oceans. The Bamako artist conceives a fishy sea, from which three birds musicians, almost transparent, emerge like unreal sirens. These living beings are rooted nowhere and they speak a musical language everybody can understand.

Installations

The events of March 1991 in Bamako - the overthrow of the dictatorship (1968-1991) of President Moussa Traoré by a military coup - offer him the opportunity to materialize the first of his installations. The theater without scene seems to him the most appropriate way to express his ideas. At the National Museum of Bamako he exhibits *Dessin d'un événement politique* (Drawing a political event) a burnt car covered with leaflets inside a monitor which shows movies demonstrations. It seemed to him essential to turn that tragic page to encourage the hope for change. In a country like Mali where the theater - actors and puppets - is extremely lively that installation was succeeding at being the most significant communication tool. Its symbolic authority, its concreteness, its ealistic and immediately evocative power, they all work as a a printing machine in the memory to classify the event in the past. The painting cannot to express what happens temporally, nor can the personal involvement of the artist. *Dessin d'un événement politique* is characterized by its own structure and highly reactive nature.

*«Universal harmony,
this concept is particularly important in
African tradition and stems from the belief
that it is in the combination of opposing and
complementary forces that lays the balance
of the universe»*

Interview with the artist Abdulaye Konaté
by Gloria de Risi



Vert clair Touareg
2017, textile, 202 x 153 cm

Since then he will further work with installations playing an important role in his oeuvre. His production will be enhanced towards a new dimension with the introduction of textile, the traditional natural weaving or the techniques bogolan using dyed cotton. Later, he will adopt almost exclusively the works of the dyers, creating patterns and shades to explore. It is difficult to get to Bamako the traditional materials of a painter - the frame and acrylic or the oil. Abdoulaye Konaté breaks the conventional limit and he pushes the Malian cotton-weavers from craft to art. Without any fetishism he adapts his oeuvre to the circumstances. He challenges the material to pay both his mental field, his native country, the issues about modernity and future. He creates his personal discourse with what is available locally and he avoids the risk of being constrained in a Western prison imposed from the material and the concept. A happy element penetrates his paint but not as a coagulant base, instead acting like a framework, where the transgressive discourse uses ordinary everyday elements. The fabric takes on the academic freedom, imposing its values and sensory qualities, while exalting the technical mastery. He decides to pursue the painting by other means. The painting turns into a geopolitical extension of the world. These large surfaces - soft or hard - leave their space to the principle of inertia and they struggle in the interface between the human and the Earth, as a kind of interior-garment. Like the *Demeure* (House) of Etienne· Martin, coats - territories show their power and control over their environment, or the Parangolé of Helio Oiticica, banners and capes, virtual skins of the inhabitants of the Brazilian favelas, at the beginning of the second half of the last century. The Malian artist is at home, and while he knows deeply his environment, he expresses his art in a physical materiality by using energetic pigments of colors, even the white ones.

Several horizontal mounting of objects lying on the sand, lined with simple elements borrowed from the traditional magical practices, such as eggs or porcupine quills, cola nuts, cowries, cotton threads, they all remind the gourds near *L'arbre à offrandes* (Tree offerings, 1998). *La défense* (Defense, 1995) bristles very neatly bundles of high porcupine quills tied and topped with a zebu horn forest. The tight grid imposed by the arrangement of beams creates a very strong feeling in relation with the ancient sites, able to link heaven to earth, as a necropolis. Africa is so fragile that certain eggs can threaten other eggs, as in *La menace* (The threat, 1995), where they lie su-

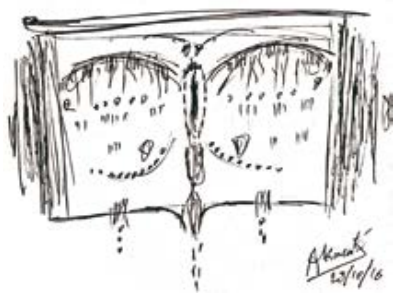
spended one above the other on a drilled plate plaxiglass made. The same feeling of insecurity is traceable in *Pouvoir Africain* (African Power, 1991), where the West is represented like a rock on top of a carpet made of eggs representing Africa.

A work – world

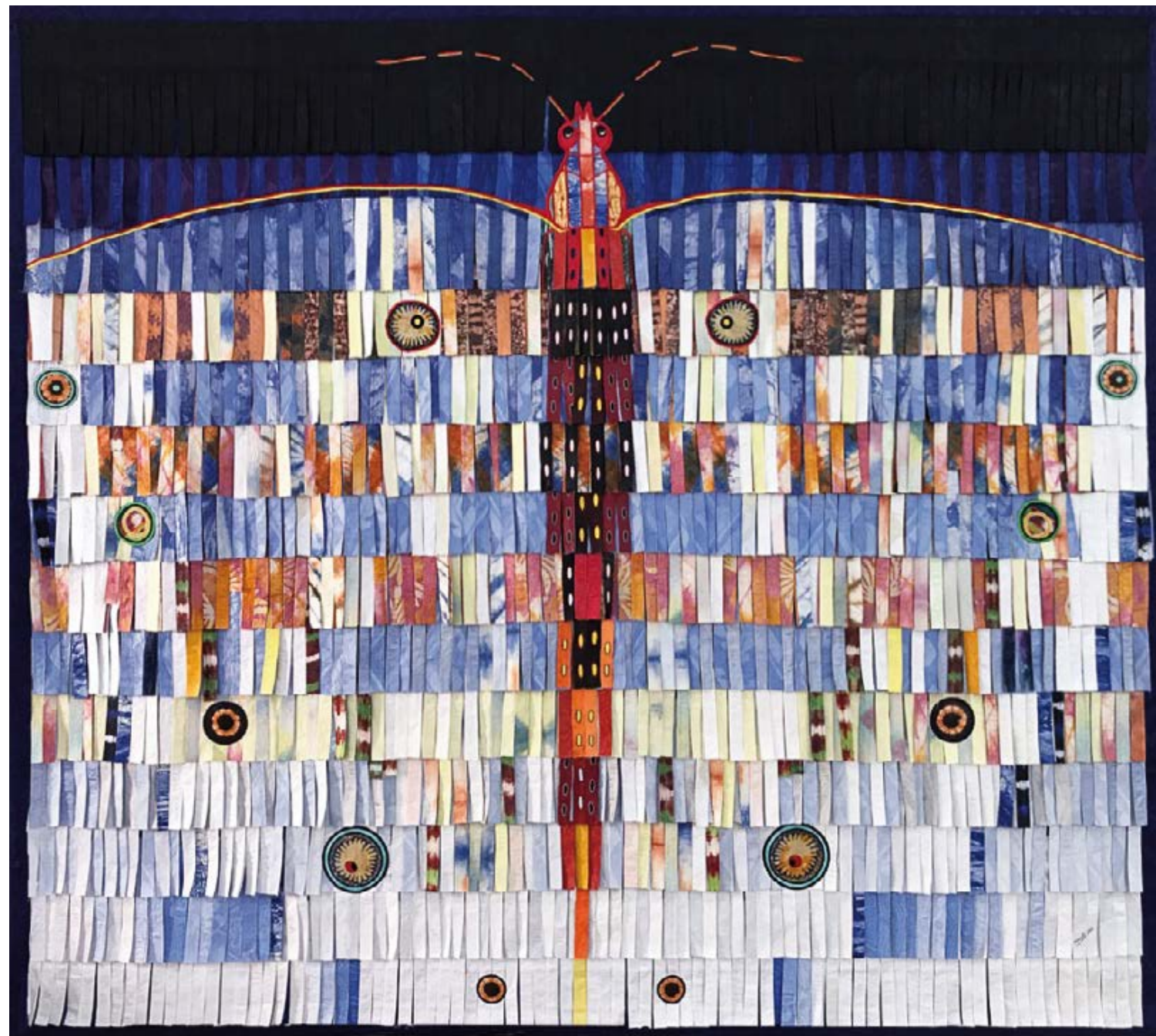
The work of Abdoulaye Konaté represents a system in itself, closely related, inbred, with his life. His language can be analyzed into three main themes. The first one is inspired by interpretations of issues relative to the Bama-na's and broadly to the Malian humanist core values: *Dancun* (Dancun), *Tafo ou la force du verbe* (Tafo or the power of the word), *Gris-gris blancs* (White Amulets) (p.101), *Le couple* (The couple), *Korèdougaw* (Korèdougaw) (p.102-103), *Hommage aux chasseurs du Mandé* (Tribute to the hunters of Mandé), *Les offrandes* (The offerings), *La mort, la naissance, la culture* (Death, birth, culture), *Offrandes de couleurs* (offerings of colors) (p.98), *Azalai* (Azalai).

The second one covers what might be called a transforming definition of geopolitics, which shows the almost timeless permanence of the news - tumults and disorders - with an exceptional eloquence : *Le drame du Sahel* (The tragedy of the Sahel), *Gris-gris pour Israël et la Palestine* (Gris-gris for Israel and Palestine) (p.75,77), *L'intolérance* (intolerance) (p.79), *Lutte contre le HIV* (Fight against HIV), *Bosnie-Rwanda-Angola* (Bosnia, Rwanda and Angola) (p.72-73), *La région des Grands Lacs* (the Great Lakes region) (p.132-133), *Génération biométrique* (Biometric Generation) (p.78, 80-81), *L'initiation* (initiation) (p.112-115), *Pouvoir et religions* (Power and religions) (p.83-87), *Le dos à l'Âme*, *Croix de lumière-Croix de sang* (Light Cross light - blood Cross) (p.76), *Tibet* (Tibet) (p.96-97), *Les fruits de la Tunisie* (The fruits of Tunisia), *Ligne rouge* (Red Line), *Non à la charia* (No to Sharia). It paints a critical view of the global and strategic environmental policy, focusing on threats for Africa and Mali. This is an extended part of his creation, in terms of his artistic commitment.

A third category develops his aesthetic concerns, with playful and colorful variations, like: *Symphonie bleue* (Symphony in Blue), *Les marcheurs* (Walkers) (p.130-131), *L'Homme nature* (Man - Nature). Mali and Africa are primarily psychic worlds, communities where each person has a specific role interacting with others, everyone is part of a scheme, with long time



Papillon
2016, textile, 261 x 232 cm





Composition rouge, noir blanc bleu,
2016, textile, 204 x 154 cm

«The relationship between abstract and figurative is perhaps the most random and thus more properly human feature of my work. It is something that is not decided in advance and that instead grows and characterizes itself differently in each work during the creation process»

Interview with the artist Abdulaye Konaté
by Gloria de Risi

span. Globalization and exile destabilize this balanced position.

Revisited Inheritance

In the first group, since 1994 the *Hommage aux chasseurs du Mandé* (Tribute to the hunters of Mandé) establishes a radical change in his work.

On the one hand, the first version of the series introduces the use of cotton cloth. On the other hand, he interprets under a new light the Malian heritage through symbols and materials, the essential elements he built his work around. He plays with the Western iconography and he saves a complementary conflict. His formal research evaluates the challenges of the tradition and he probes resonances in the art of the moment. He reverses the usual modes of contemporary art and he opposes them to a nostalgic visual reconstruction.

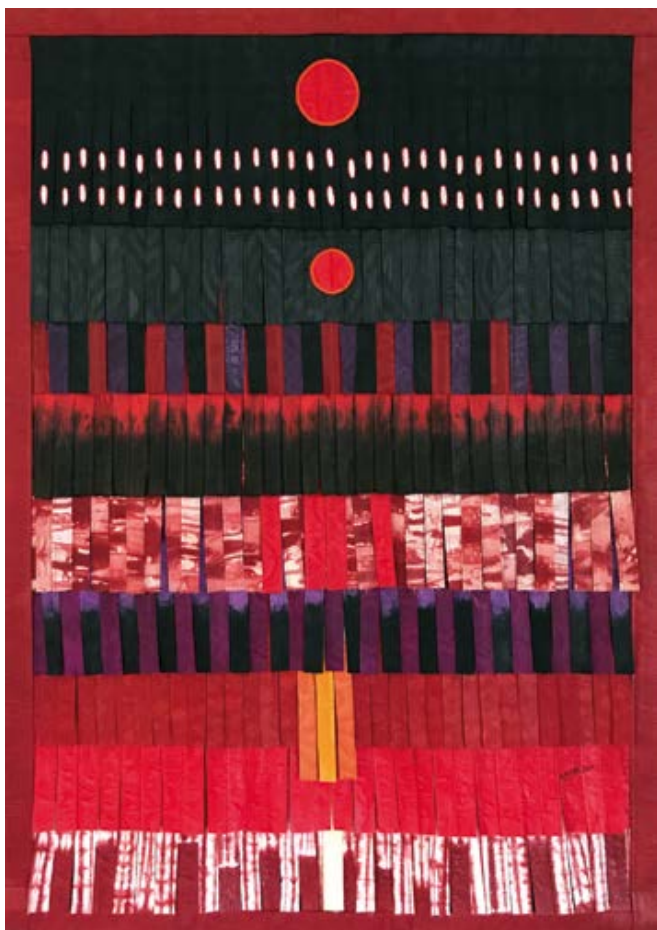
Gentleman free of any academicism, he invented connections between paradoxical fields, without emphasis or obsession, and since then he began to build up his personal trajectory.

Hommage aux chasseurs du Mandé (Tribute to hunters of Mandé) presents in the same frame some hunters and people taking part to a parade like the one organized during special ceremonies. The image is turned into a kind of shield, a system where the relations are clearly marked. The work captures how the rich and educated group of people stands up, within a highly defined system of colors and codes. The amulets on the jackets protect them from the dangers they may incur during their activity and they give them a great power. Konaté quartered a coat into a painting, a bow: the position of deference is obvious. The brotherhood

of hunters - and the larger social body associated to it - has kept alive their praxis despite the external pressures. The outfit almost religious belonging to the privilege of hunting plays on the Malian people who respect the magic behind them highly. He manipulates the visual effect of moving hunters and of flickering the objects onto their costumes. In Cuba Konaté has faced kinetic art. Since the twentieth century South and Central America were showing a strong interest for the innovation, for modern European art as epitomized by Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto. Soto was inviting the viewer to look at the artwork by destabilizing the reality as well as by making an art truly realistic art by reproducing dynamic



Triangle aux traits (rouge)
2017, textile, 147 x 99,5 cm



Les deux cercles rouges
2017, textile, 147 x 108 cm



Composition en rouge (noire,jaune,violet-et-gris)
2017, textile, 158 x 116 cm

and sensory effects.

The magic artworks having amulets within them create an original cosmic order where supplication and authoritarian statements are associated with the “absence” of color. They are kinds of portable altars where the artist and the viewer are the addressee and the donor. Constructions whose unit is without limit, with a monumental tension in pristine sites, and with bulges on little bags on the whiteness. From this sophisticated crucible a vertigo is born with a spiral of energy with a flux alternatively soothing and disturbing.

Gris-gris blancs (White amulets) unfolds like a great white carpet with small white scapulars. Abdoulaye Konaté applies to *Gris-gris blancs* his accumulative appetite, in perfect continuity with the surface, while the pictorial and symbolic strategy goes beyond the amulet, since it is empty here. It works as identificatory and identity matrix, and its title even more. Recognizable and not loaded, it works more effectively than a representation, bypassing its initial identity: stylized, bleached, vacant, it is an appearance whose appearance is empowered and its content is metaphorically plated. The gris-gris is exhibited sometimes in anthropomorphized penis, inevitably calling the notion of power, the constraints arising from the need to share, while the white color ices the scene. The magical dimension assigned to this context is established against the cruel vagaries of diplomatic negotiations, the sacrificed children and persecuted martyrs, victims and reprisals, bans and massacres. The pictorial space opens widely to lights and shadows underlying sculptural qualities. Fetishism is not a delusion called to veil an undeserved fate but the certainty of a real dramatic resolution. The gris-gris triumph in a back-and-forth between an old belief and the today pragmatism. The recipients of these paintings provide a further meaning aux gris-gris as human consciousness. The White gris-gris will swarm in his work in a series in which they are the sole object, and in paintings where they act as significant but non-core fragments, spanning from *Israël-Palestine* (Israel – Palestine) to *Génération biométrique* (Biometric Generation) passing by *Les fruits de Tunisie* (Tunisia fruits), *L'Initiation* (Initiation) or *Le dos à l'Âme. La mort, la naissance, la culture* (Death, birth, Culture, 1993) illustrates the will to restore the synthesis of old signs. The object will exist as plastic carrier with remarkable symbolic meaning. It is composed of sophisticated modules borrowed from several Malian cultures. The work is composed of

a painted canvas covering the wall and the floor to delineate the area of intervention, and a vertical wall with a wide character Bamana black. Furthermore there is a deathbed authentic Senufo and an altar Dogon dedicated to Fertility.

Two volumes and a sign. Signs express ideas and induce interpretative approaches. The pictogram Bamana invites the not educated viewer - thanks to an interplay of textures and suspension in a quiet environment -, to raise questions first, and then to experiment sensations and feelings. The artist makes his comment on the design of the cosmos in the divine consciousness, the biological formation of man. This complex web of plots stylized or real, in two or three dimensions, combine with a certain harmony of heaven, human gestation, coded numbers, spine initiation, the walking the mythical snake, man, woman and gods. A series contains illustrates the mental Bamana and its cosmogony. The colors in the system Komo are essential. Red stands for blood and fire, the white is the light, the truth and the air, while the black is the sense of mystery of the origin of life, earth and water. Everything is in part defined by the perception offered to the gaze. This abstract and colorful message extols the magnificence of words and the significance of symbols.

Tafo ou la force du verbe (Tafo or strength of the verb 1995) unfolds on a white surface lined with black and red threads, filled nodules. Three calabashes containing the same thread are arranged down on a strip of cloth. This impressive Lacanian canvas involves the descourse on the speech used by the secret society of the Komo, with reference to witchcraft practice willing to disturb the original order of things, since the knot encloses the secret and the word can kill the meaning.

Offrandes de couleur - rouge, noir, blanc (Offerings of color - red, black, white, 2007) develops in a triptych artwork the already known magic constituents. The three panels, cotton made, show in their upper parts the organic patterns here geometrized, in the lower parts the shapes achieve abstract qualities - crushed and tangled - like the objects of sacrifice. Squared and rectangular amulets frame the main figure. A red square, a black triangle, a white oval circle, a black thread complete the scheme. In the Bamana religion the offerings allow to conciliate the divine favor through the mediation of intermediate - or ancestor spirits. They are of various kinds, sacrificial animals, money, food, and are accompanied by rituals adapted to the cir-



Bleu au cercle rouge et jaune
2017, textile, 143 x 118 cm



Violet au personnage
2017, textile, 155 x 203 cm



Composition gris plus bleu
2016, textile, 214 x 153 cm

cumstances.

With a more sensual inspiration two artworks *Korèdougaw* (Les bouffons - Jesters) and *Azalai* (Fête au Nord - Feast in the North) are cut in the productions of dyeing in Bamako and they recall the rituals and festivals by sharing their visual expansion. In these artworks Abdoulaye Konaté restore the vibrations, the tremors, the gestures of musicians, the tools, the expressive masks, the heads of wooden horses, the joy of the feast at the end of the long journey of the “caravanes” and the transgressive behavior of Kore's.

At dusk, the shadows lengthen, the colors dissolve into the night, the camels become visible on the horizon, the clear skin of musical instruments shines. A profusion of creatures goes around a dancer. The musicians live in an abstract status, where they transmit records and they are living men. Their music takes their origin back to the source of the art, for centuries it has been modulating the same epics, legends and chants in which an entire nation finds greatness and pride to live the present.

In Modern and Contemporary art the perception of new subjectivity is based on a discovered corporeity. The fusion of body and spirit incarnates what African traditions have been practising for ages. Series concerning dance make clear the metamorphosis of the presence, of a deep imaginary gestulation, of bodies colonized and their movements in space to reach the farthest end and apprenticeship through art.

Dancers by themselves or in couples, *Danse de Kayes* or *Danse au CAMM* (p.154) mingle gestures of contemporary dance with codes and batons of traditional dance. Since 2012 these dancers decorate la façade of Foyer de Murier in Paris.

The universe, the social, the local

From work to work Abdoulaye was deeply involved in investigating the state of universe and its tragic moment. Will the world ever be able to hold its vertigo ? And harmony and peace ever be reached? Far from the Manichean belief of good and evil, which are equal, his canvases are artworks before being declarations.

He rejects the idea of being an « artist dégagé » as often criticism represent him. He raises problems, makes images and forms, explains his idea

of freedom and of subjective capability. His works are not overcrowded of intentions but they give a civic and artistic view of social reality. Social and not political, observing the situation and its effects on populations – without pessimism, despair or pathos but as alert, a warning against the uncertainty of the present. He draws his innermost visions from experiences he had faced presents them again as a mixture of snapshots. He is less concerned about giving evidence of events than to investigate energies and ideas underlying an artwork and its truth. He alludes to the ultimate sense of existence, of the superior essence of things, of the will of being together, of traumas that violence causes to populations. His canvases though an appealing aspect are interrogations that causing estrangement. They are even more important than answers. The purpose of his work is a warning: showing wars means that they have not been eradicated yet and socialities are fragile and in danger. Is it possible to save the existence? While opposing viewers to masses the artist intends to shock rather than to appease his work. His work is not appeasement, the life like reality is in turmoil, unbalanced, in ruins, not the bare representation of facts.

His work is based on the strong necessity of establishing a practice, a method and of choosing the proper means. His coherence is rooted to his long apprenticeship, his personal history, his perception of the historicity of his culture and of the right mythic structures. He does not pretend to paint elements of the African cause but subjects common to other countries. His production is also effective out of this country. Also there is a great independence among works they are not subordinated to a didactic heritage. Only a critic relationship with the past allows him to introduce novelties – migration of ideas and themes shifting from acrylic to textile – using contemporary causes. Heritage seen as usage, just as underlined by Michel Foucault. Past and present recaptures as a dynamic synthesis of earlier events.

The artist depicts local and international events, clearly and radically attempting to depict our century considered not understandable. The whole aspect of his work overcomes personal expression.

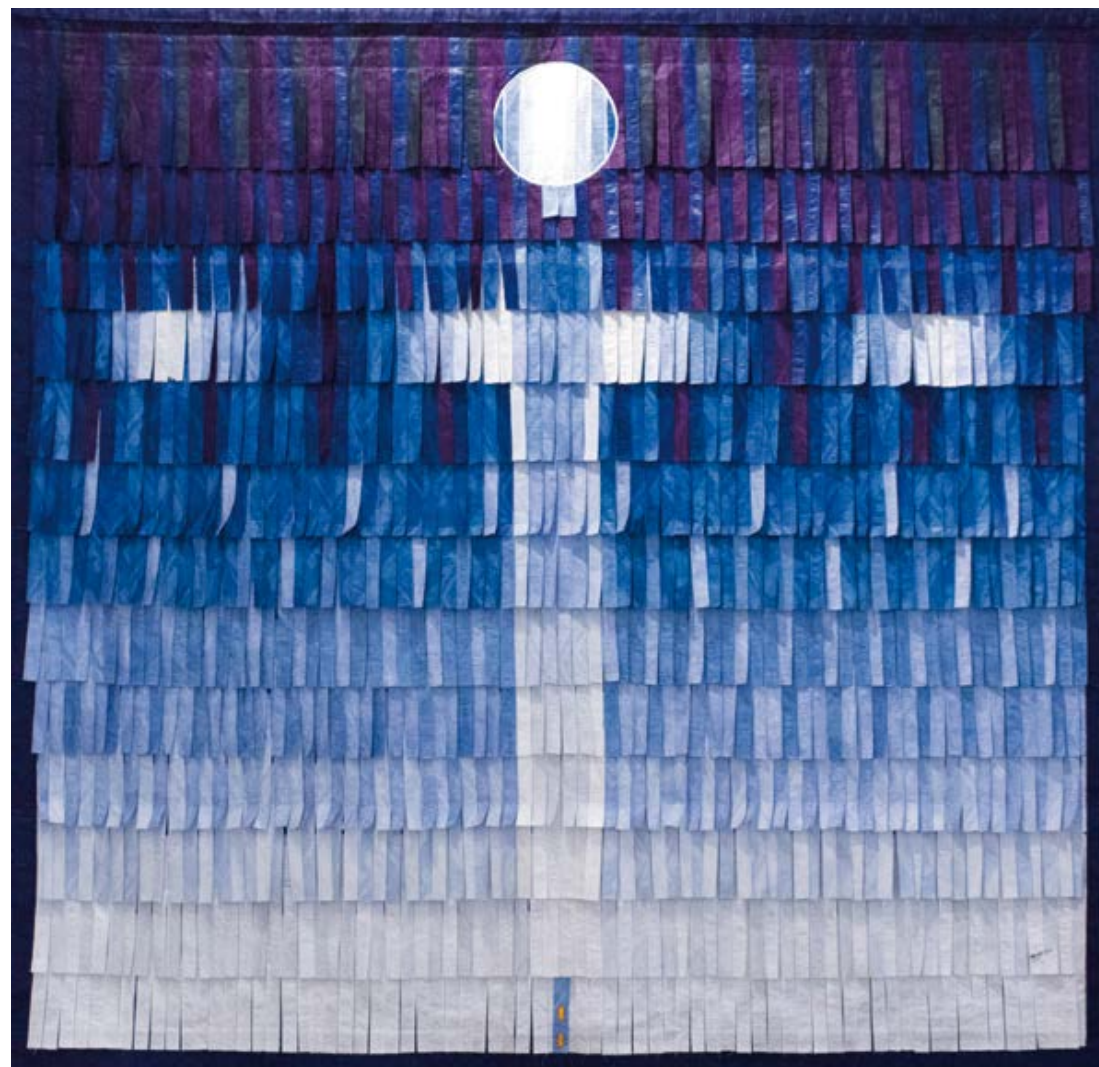
The second category consists of large installations : their format has increased in size in *La région des Grands Lacs* (1997) fourteen meters by three. On the canvas featuring the map of Africa battles are hinted at by shells and bullets are sewn on the cloth while traces of footsteps are drawn on the ground. The region of Grand lacs in Rwanda in the Kivu all around the sour-



Ocre au Jaune - Regard
2018, textile, 231 x 186 cm

«The decision to focus on fabric comes from the desire to use materials produced in my own country, to work from elements that are closest to me. In Mali we produce a lot of cotton and therefore there is a wide availability of this material for artists. Not to mention that it is particularly suitable for the creation of large-scale works»

Abdoulaye Konaté



Composition en bleu personnage en blanc
2016, textile, 224 x 218 cm



L'oiseau 2Ab.K
2018, textile, 173,5 x 118 cm

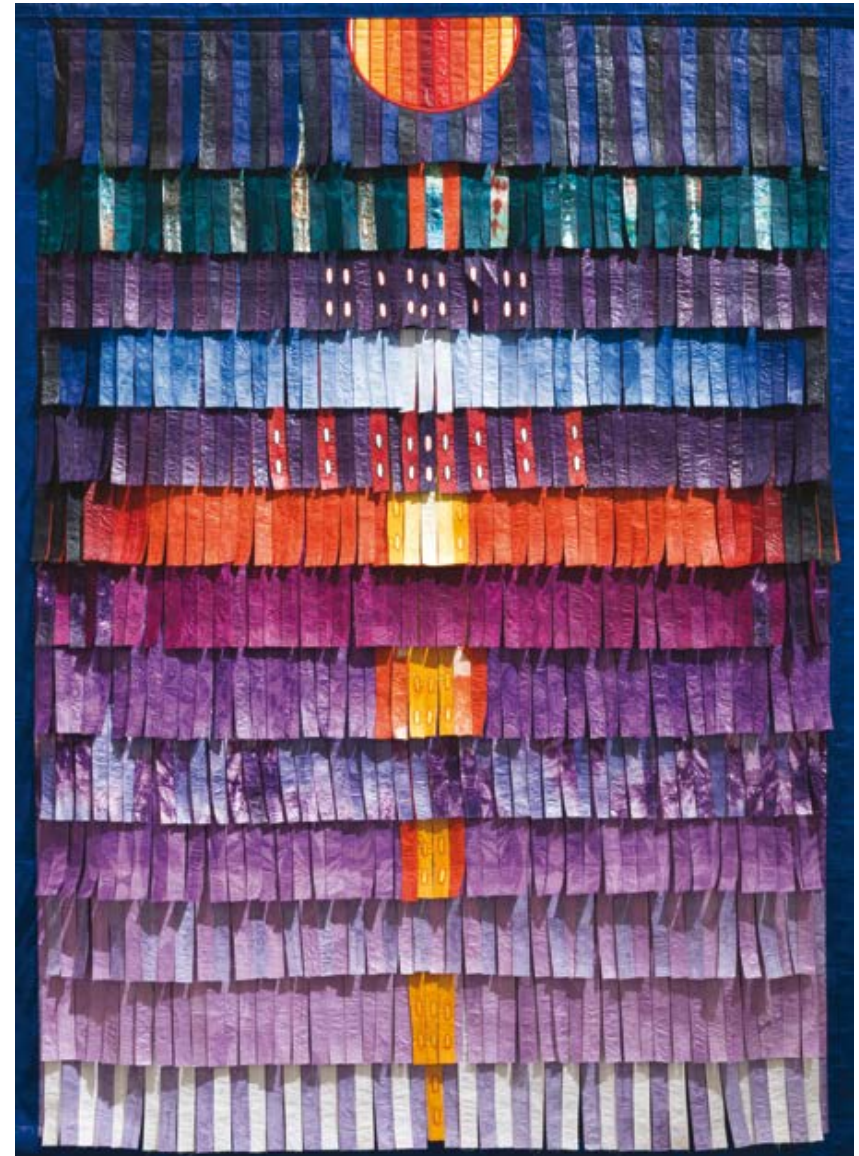


Vert pour Sidy
2018, textile, 149 x 116 cm

ce of Nile and Lajes Victoria and Tanganyika was theatre of the genocide killing 800'000 Tutsi from April 8th, to July 4th, 1994. The same dramatic view in *Bosnia, Rwanda, Angola* (1995) with a line up of four white sheets soaked in blood-stains and the ground covered with empty garments, human vestiges. They testify the universality of wars and the serious and grave consequences both mental and physical caused. *Intolérance* (1999) an abstract and less situated painting in relief evokes the severe difficulties of Africa and reiterates the question : Why does Africa suffer so much? Intolerance mostly regards persons confined in the suburbs. First victims of this tragedy are the weak, the children, the poor, the immigrants, the Blacks, the illiterates. All of them are chosen according to identification rules inflexible and shameful. A child face emerges from a heap of clothes, souvenirs and reliques of friperies. Disappearance, injustice and impossibilities of giving an account of his/her own life and identity are clearly outlined in this work. This painting reminds of stylistic references of «ArtePovera» as in Pistoletto «Venere davanti agli stracci» (Venus of the Rags) without his sense of humour and derision. The architecture of «Le Defense» may also be found in the Christian Boltanski gigantic creation titled «Personnes (People, 2010)» a hill of old rags overlooking a cemetery arranged in squares. Work of sensitization *Les artistes africains et le sida* (The African Artists and the HIV ,1995): the silhouette of a man stands on a high textile at whose feet is placed on a suitcase containing the male sexual organs cause of the disease. Dealing with the same subject another artwork – a patchwork of 6000 sq.mt – covered the ground of the Bamako football stadium at the opening of the African Cup of Nations. Most of it was destroyed by fire and the remains are in the National Museum of Mali in Bamako.

Gris-gris pour Israël et la Palestine (Amulets for Israel and Palestine, 2002) four panels filled with the gris gris and other emblems are arrayed as follows: on the first the Israeli flag, on the second a Keffieh and three Israeli flags, on the third three Keffiehs and one Israeli flag, on the last one Keffieh. Abdoulaye Konaté operates in the interstice. The four parts become a whole, annihilate each other thus making evident their differences and their being complementary.

No sign of any possible racial mix, the artist tries to overcome oppositional strategies in the relations and failing there he deconstructs and produces a metaphorical use of the confrontation: a canvas, its verso and vice versa. It



Composition violet, vert, bleu et orange
2017, textile, 219 x 154 cm



Violet au demi cercle
2017, textile, 151 x 115 cm

is an in-depth analysis of a situation ascribable to nationalism and to the colonial greed of XX century and also to the idea that it was possible to solve problems still unsolved.

Gris-gris pour Israël et la Palestine is crucial for many reasons : first of all its spectacular effects get the viewer to consider himself the real maker, owner interpreter just as the artist. And then for the first time the usage of flags. Kind of Land Art, symbol of Contemporary art of the 20th Century, flags follow different steps. From Jasper Jones to Andrés Serrano, from Ali-ghiero e Boetti to Jean Pierre Raynaud. The flag – as artistic genre – bears traces of wars though history. It is an abstraction of geopolitical entity, full of emotional and symbolic hints, an emblem that allows everybody to recognize a country out of a piece of cloth. It is a flag planted on the conquered lands, which accompanies wars and revolutions and marks the border walls. Other important artworks will have flags, like *L'initiation*, *Le dos à l'Âme*, *Génération biométrique* et *Les fruits de Tunisie*.

The keffieh doesn't stand for a specific country but it represents the Palestinian political power. Following the Arabic costumes it is a hat but since Intifada it represents Palestinian people intended to show their gratitude and solidarity and also meant a substitute for the official colours. The weft and the grill represent the caustrophic ambience of colonies.

The triptich titled *Tibet* (2013) also follows the scheme of a submitted country amidst American and Chinese flames. The red and pleaded envelop of a monk's habit, silhouette without body nor head is the representation of a State whose sovereignty is mocked at. *Les fruits de Tunisie* (2011) frame of red blood of the Tunisian flag and a fruit stall, in memory of Sidi Bouzi tragic events. *Ligne rouge* (2013) lined with Israeli and Iranian flags shows the insurmountable situation between the two countries, around a sinister nuclear logo with black and yellow fins on a screen of minarets and veiled women.

Abdoulaye Konaté animates a serious reflection on the universal complex strategies of conveying riches, cultural practices and basic know-how. In *Initiation* (2004) he underlines the affinity between the dogmas, the multiplicity and the relativity of values of each country. Of the seven parts of this piece he sets on the same step the ideological and religious principles crucial to large cultural areas. Religions, beliefs, legislation, education divide or unite people relevant universal themes such as life, death and power. Ideas and

emblematic objects, refined manners and behaviour develop personal and collective identities together with the body politic if the nations.

Génération biométrique was created in 2008 for an exhibition at Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno a Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Invitations were sent to African artists requesting them to devote their works to the theme of immigration so evident on the island beach. In a cavedium (small courtyard) hung 5 canvases of his. A large blue surface decorated with the starry emblem of the European union was the background of another work put before it, white gris gris filled the well-arranged contours, cut out from coloured materials, silhouette of amputated swimmers, lacerated bodies of people who have forcibly lost something while crossing, imagining on the horizon a statue of Liberty that has nothing to offer but illusions.

Another work retraces human diversity under the banners of Morocco, Tunisie, USA, UE and United Kingdom. Countries of departures and destinations to exile. The fourth work shows a man offering his brain since it is what now they demand after exploiting mineral and land resources and manpower labour.

The last one explains the title with a group of identification data – physical and biological marks – observed as the trace of an animal following hunters' footprints, in order to keep a person under constant surveillance with technological devices more or less visible. This assemblage is a model of montage, of painting in volume and a repeated process of calm landsurveying of the world. The artist demolishes blockage organized by States that conceive immigration depending on their «besoins et priorités» (needs and priorities), he emphasize frontiers – enveloped in their resounding canvases – the abominable geopolitical logic applied to Africa always considered as a reservoir from which to draw freely.

Since 1990 the painter has been interested in the variety of the grey – spotted with black and white colours, the guinea hen's plumage can be found in several acrylics on paper titled «forms et coulers de gris gris». He generalizes a cultural and aesthetic traditional element. Among the Bamana this bird has a special prestige because is gifted with rare energy and vitality, a fervent maternal instinct and lays lots of eggs.

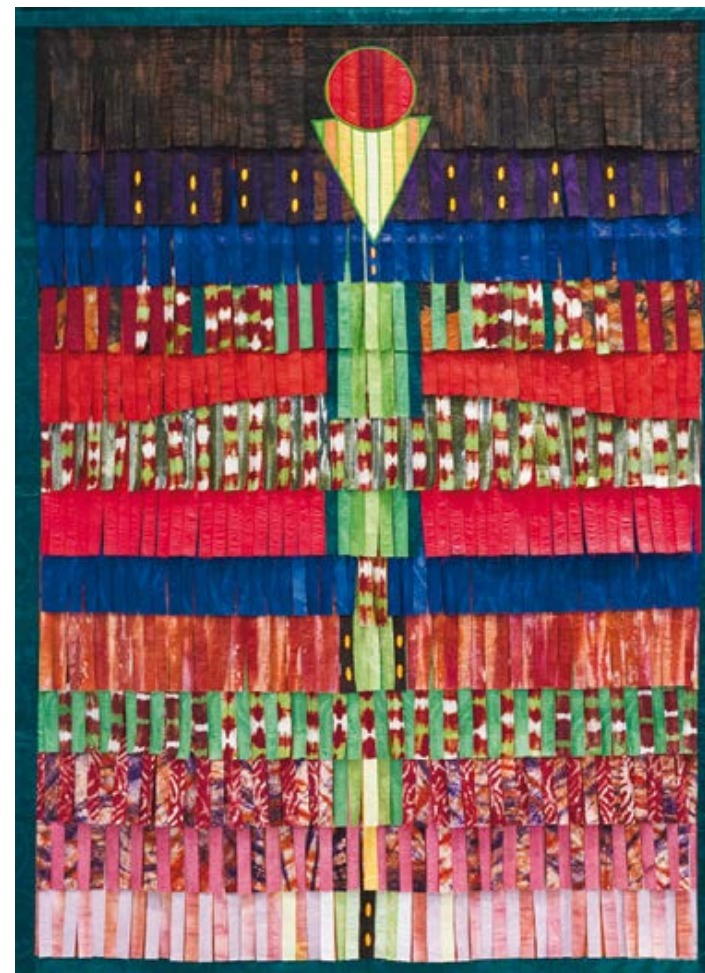
Pouvoirs et religions (Powers and Religions, 2011) and *Trilogie religieuse* (Religious Trilogy, 2013) are two large colorful canvases deploying on an elegant,



Composition en rouge au cercle vert
2017, textile, 156 x 114 cm

*«He refuses
to approach the rid of images available today.
He works with simple
and terribly effective means.
He creates spaces for reflection,
offers new perspectives
inviting the viewer to make a thorough investigation
of the meaning of art
and of the place of man in the world»*

Joëlle Busca



Composition avec cercle et triangle
2017, textile, 157 x 218 cm



Jaune or soleil
2017, textile, 159 x116 cm

harmonious and mobile field, with powerful and visually appealing effects of three-dimensionality; the sharp clarity of the symbols the secular power and religious power are reduced to their simplest expression, but perfectly evident. On the first artwork, a cross, a crown and a crescent are aligned, on the second there are a Star of David, a cross and a bloody sword. In same religions the upheavals of recent history have strengthened the religious side as a marker of identity.

African governments struggle to establish national or regional policies consistent on the social, educational and military forces, capable of developing secular republics. Three phenomena are shaking powers in Africa: the opposition parties, unemployed youth - qualified or not - and religious fanatics. Concerning the relationship between religion and politics the attitude of the rulers is very ambiguous. These artworks thrive on ontological proximity between the plumage of the guinea fowl and silence.

In Mars 22, 2012, Mali felt in confusion. The military coup revealed the country weaknesses: incompetence of the State, corruption, factional battle, inoperative army, separatist tendencies in the North, disintegration of institutions, and it demonstrates the progression towards a difficult situation. All fundamentalism is against and suspicious of art. Abdoulaye Konaté, reacts very strongly to these events. For him democracy is freedom to conquer, neither the army nor religion can govern a country. His most recent works are imposing not for the exuberance of horror but rather for the conciseness of his expression. The difficulty and complexity of living of the population induced in him to create a visual shock, to be seen and understood in terms of his personal turmoil: an incisive analysis, dense images, acids, compressed. Images that hurt. He describes the relations of domination over the minds and bodies. Against the story and interpretation, within his works he describes the view governing the activities of the extremist groups, reduced to dogma.

Croix de lumière – Croix de sang (Light Cross – Blood Cross Blood 2010) is a diptych showing the three traditional colors of Komo: white, red and black. Their metaphorical value is very similar in Africa and Europe, and similarly ambivalent. These two pictures are rich of sinister and secret-like black colour announcing mystery and menace, implacable authority. The painter uses entirely the black color to reveal tensions, to give body and depth to the aggression. By the volume of the cotton strips incompletely attached

and forming a moving scale, it magnifies the black and white colors creating the frame and illuminating the artwork where the gray acts unresolved but soothes as a cease-fire, a temporary compromise. The cross is the separation between the innocence on the white side and cruel drama on the red side. This work speaks of religions and their difficulties, of religious people who adopt religions in order to have a deeper reason to live and to create a dialogue with others, rarely reached.

Le dos à l'Âme (2008), by this very poetic and ironic title, Abdoulaye draws a parallel between the constraints faced by women and the Africa. Three women seen from the back emerge from the soil. On a white board, they are equal with the the other thanks to their Wahhabis black dress. On the back of the first figure is engraved the Christian cross and the Star of David. On the second, the circle of yellow stars of the European Union and the Statue of Liberty, conceived as archetypes of the West. The latter refers to a not-state, yet, since her back is there is the map of Africa, and her neck supports a bundle with the Chinese flag which seeks to substitute the West in Africa. Africa supports China here represented as a burden for the continent. The three states of humanity thus synthesized are more concerned with moral values, loss of respect for others and physical injustice perpetrated by globalization rather than religious struggles. This economic and political battle accompanying discord and fanaticism has dislodged a strict ideological debate.

Non à la charia (No to Sharia, 2013) dialogue with *Au Mali, au Sahel et à Tombouctou* (In Mali, Sahel and Timbuktu 2013) thanks to the national flag, to the three silhouettes of men in the desert and the blue building on the background. All of them are topped with a bloody sword in a target.

Aesthetics

Since 2007 there is a third category, besides the two aforementioned ones. This category is less abundant, with pleasant and lyrical content. These paintings belonging to it are monochrome or polychrome, made of strips of cotton, with sophisticated tones, fastened vertically and floating.

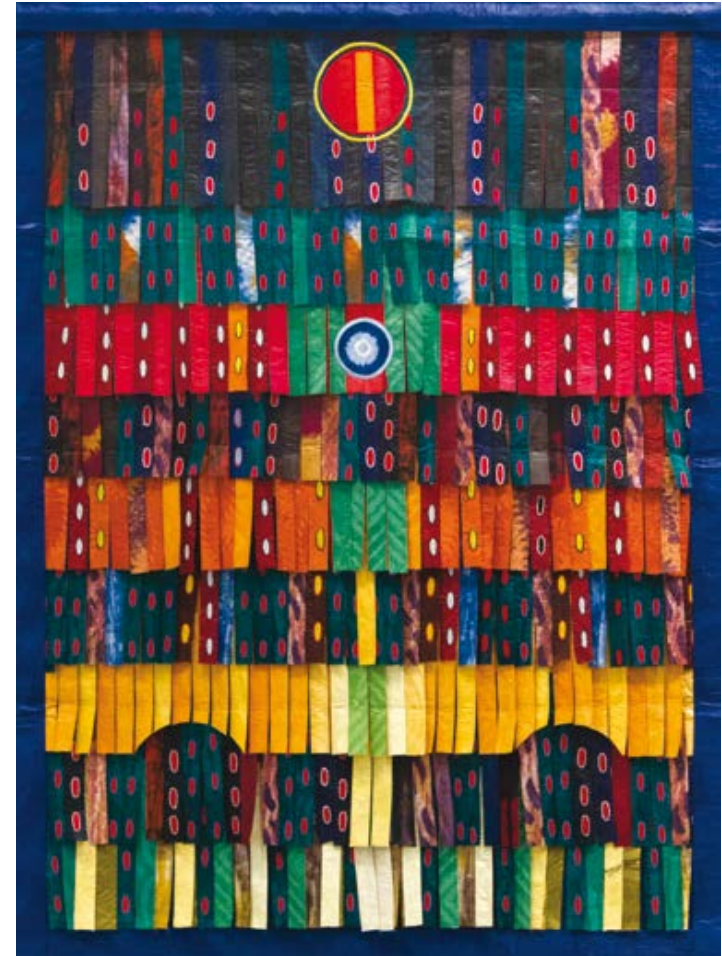
Symphonie bleue (Blue Symphony 2007), is an epiphanic presence, jubilant, the color and the resulting effects are vested in the emotion and enjoyment



Composition bleue, orange, et vert
2017, textile, 219 x 187 cm

of the gaze. Apology blue chart, it takes the viewer in a sea of purity and intense immateriality, *Symphonie bleue* investigates the spectrum of blue, quiet reflection in the white indigo mostly violet passing through International Klein Blue. In the same vein *L'homme nature* (2012) gushes like a breathing space, airy and serene, in a multitude of shades of green, more yellow green tree, and there a man ideally integrated with nature. *Les marcheurs* (Walkers 2006), is a painting with encompassing light effects and it touches to another register. It could be a video, it is a movie on a canvas. It can be seen in different ways: file hyperreal with slaves - historical of our times - floating rags; procession of the Magi richly endowed and adorned, wealthy men en route to their destiny occupied in the pleasure of the company and of the promenade. Abdoulaye Konaté likes very much the decomposition of the subject and an organization in shimmering facets. The declination of a rainbow tapped into the African textile crafts creates a ratio that increases the vehemence of forces. The antidogmatic artworks of Abdoulaye Konaté witness his creative research, constantly renewed, often unexpectedly. The skeleton of his accomplishment stands in what troubles people. His work is far removed from the contemporary academic habits built on consumption, kitsch, mass exposure and spectacular violence. He creates a new language, perceived as necessary. He does not stage the physical brutality inflicted but instead he presents an allegorical treatment of it. He denounces the aggression without handle it or recompose it because his action fits into the plastic challenge of practical situations: events, crises or statements of fact. He even takes the risk of representing Muslim women as the archetypes of the religious tyrannies over Arab and African populations. He is close to interventionist art, always sensitive to the aesthetic of his art, like a discrete fighter, without cynicism, as an artist expressing his sensitivity to humankind and its spirituality. His works are bound by the materials, the color density, the veracity of rhythms and approaches, achieving a unique artistic vision and expressing a virulence against authoritarian powers and obscurantism behind them. He refuses to approach the riot of images available today. He works with simple and terribly effective means. He creates spaces for reflection, offers new perspectives inviting the viewer to make a thorough investigation of the meaning of art and of the place of man in the world.

(originally published in the catalogue: *Abdoulaye Konaté, The World in Textile*, 2013, Afrika Museum of Berg en Dal in collaboration with Primo Marella Gallery Milan)



Composition entre rouge et vert
2017, textile, 152 x 113 cm

Do not chain up colours

Critical essay by Silvia Perego

*«The colour is everywhere;
but wherever it is,
there's a symbol yet»*

René Lucien Rousseau

A symphonie of colours, a wide deep research through symbol and essence, this is the path Abdoulaye Konaté is crossing in his latest works.

It's impossible to look at his artworks remaining emotionless.

Konaté's joyful compositions bring us in a universe filled with symbols, in an atmosphere charged of signifiiances.

Even if the political issue is cast aside, his language is unchanged, always strong, substantial, stripped of every unfoundamental decoration, forged to speak of Human and Nature through a simple medium, such as the colour. «The color is flowchart of social and mental life, it articulates space and time, coordinating and creating systems of knowledge. The colour is an art of memory. But an art of memory which differs from a society to another, which is transformed over time».

The language of colours is made of extrinsic impressions but also internal affections. Following the Islamic culture there's this liminal faculty, proper of the soul, that intermediates the perceptions between the external and the unintelligible world. The colours are the words of living nature that allow communications but also interpretations. In a Quran passage is stated that the colours that the Earth shows us are signs for thinkers. And here we want to stroll with you in Abdoulaye Konaté's colourful world.

*«Do you not see that Allah
sends down from the clouds water,
then brings forth with it fruits
of different colours.
And in the mountains there are streaks,
white and red,*



Composition en noir blanc et rouge
2017, textile, 218 x 152 cm



Personnage en noir blanc (fond rouge)
2017, textile, 218 x 183 cm

*of different colours,
and some intensely black.
And of people
and animals
and cattle there are different colours likewise»*

Quran, 35:27:28

Three colours first: white, black and red. Magnetar poles connecting the inner substance of every ancient symbolism about colours. In Africa the colour is a religious symbol, full of significances and power.

The antithesis of black and white, darkness and light, the absence and the knowledge, the earth and the sky is always balanced with the brightful red, the blood flowing in every human being.

«Different dying as medium for knowing the other and for acting on him. The colours have the role of enhance the energy or power of either textile and individual».

In Africa white is the colour of the dead, but his function is to “defy” death, a good omen. Black is the chaos, is the origin, but being origin means being cradle of generation, cradle of possibilities, nest of fertility. Red is power, is blood and its overflowing life. It is the symbolic pulse of every existence, memory of tribal sacrifices and prophecies.

*« Do not touch this animal,
it is dangerous
for both friends and enemies.
Risking loss of everything,
let it blooms,
do not chain up liberty»*

Alioum Fantouré

Some hints on Abdoulaye Konaté's chromatic world can be experienced following the path of two different African countries towards independence.



Bleu de lune
2017, textile, 155,5 x 118 cm



Bleu aux coquillages 3C
2018, textile, 150 x 115 cm

These steps unveil coloured consistency and substance through National flags.

Liberty and union have been symbolized for the first time in Ghana national flag in 1958 with a black star laying on three “panafrican colours”: red, yellow, green (same colours as the Malian flag and other National flags in Africa).

Colors that are so important in Abdoulaye Konaté creations. Black as liberty. Red as required sacrifice to independence. Yellow as sun and prosperity. Green as nature and hope.

Following this symbolic path of colours on African flags, in 1994 in South Africa, the current flag was chosen to represent the country's new democracy after the end of Apartheid. This flag adds blue and white to the other four colours. Blue as sea and rivers. Blue as water, medium for life and white for peace and justice.

Deepening our research through Konaté colours, yellow recalls also the golden desert, the Sahel, a strip of land running across Africa that marks every man living there. Harsh land for harsh living expressed in cheerful colours in “Homme du Sahel”.

Rather than evading from the African colourism, Abdoulaye Konaté blissfully embraces this world pigmentation, unveiling for us a wide Baudelairian universe.

The syncretism of symbols, the disclosed synesthesia, the unwavering chromatic seduction, all competing in a playful experience for the spectator, bringing him in a textile world full of allegories related by materials, density of colours, rhythm and vital impulses.

Colours redetermine a new utopian space, where opposing emotions confuse themselves in a harmony of opposite, an abstract symphony that possesses «the diffusion of infinite things».

Color is only one of the infinite enchanted symbols in Abdoulaye Konaté's universe and, as Paul Klee clearly said: decipher symbols bring through the «unfathomable depth of primordial breath».

*«Nature is a temple where living pillars
 Let sometimes emerge confused words;
 Man crosses it through forests of symbols
 Which watch him with intimate eyes.
 Like those deep echoes that meet from afar
 In a dark and profound harmony,
 As vast as night and clarity,
 So perfumes, colors,
 tones answer each other.
 There are perfumes fresh as children's flesh,
 Soft as oboes, green as meadows,
 And others, corrupted, rich, triumphant,
 Possessing the diffusion of infinite things,
 Like amber, musk, incense and aromatic resin,
 Chanting the ecstasies of spirit and senses»¹*

Charles Baudelaire



Du noir au jaune
 2017, textile, 150,5 x 116 cm



Buddha en violet et bleu
2017, textile, 222,5 x 196 cm



Buddha 1
2017, textile, 226 x 186 cm

Composition en jaune
2018, textile, 267 x 329 cm



Installation view of *Ravelled Threads* at Sean Kelly, New York
Courtesy: Sean Kelly, New York

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS & COLLECTIONS



Bosnie Angola Rwanda
1996, textile

Installation view from Documenta12, Kassel 2007

DOCUMENTA 12

Kassel, 2007



Gris Gris pour Israël et la Palestine,
2005, textile, 360 x 1840 cm

Installation view from Documenta12, Kassel 2007

GALERIE NATIONALE DE DAKAR

Dakar, 2011



Installation view from Galerie Nationale de Dakar, 2011



Installation view from Galerie Nationale de Dakar, 2011



GENERATION BIOMETRIQUE

Courtesy Sigg Collection



Génération Biométrique
2008-2012, textile,
298 x 625 cm

INIVA 5TH WINDOW COMMISSION
RIVINGTON PLACE

London, 2011

Pouvoir et Religion was commissioned by Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) for the large window of Rivington Place, London. As an organisation Iniva explores the politics of race and encourages greater engagement with modern and contemporary art that lies outside the Western canon. Konaté's work and approach to universal subjects meant he was a natural choice for being invited to speak literally to the street, and offer comment on society.

This spectacular work in its subject and references are characteristic of his oeuvre, where it is customary for him to explore and debate universal issues by combining political comment with traditional craftsmanship.

"I am interested in social problems, in human suffering" which he feels is reflected in so much around him - in the relations between states, society and the family. Over time he has spoken about environmental concerns as well as human rights issues, de-forestation and living under dictatorship. He has referred to the politics and tensions between Israel and Palestine, the genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda and Angola.

He feels compelled to speak of the human condition in all its frailties: "The ultimate message for me is the call for tolerance. To encourage men to understand and accept each other. This is the only possible solution to the problems of our society."

Extract from Tessa Jackson essay for Norrköping Museum, 2014



Pouvoir et Religion (Power and Religion)

2011, textile, 296 x 693 cm

Installation view from INIVA 5th Window Commission, Rivington Place, London, 2011

RIVINGTON
PLACE



"It represents the ambiguity between religion and power. There is still great uncertainty about how to break religious fanaticism. This work reflects the whole threat of jihadism. In Mali we have seen the consequences of religious fundamentalism. Mine was a country full of creativity. Then, when the jihadists occupied the North, we witnessed the atrocities they can commit. And the TV does not show enough with the images it transmits. They have abolished music, football, art and do not want to hear about culture. We are back to the Middle Ages. Whatever you say, you are manipulated by Western culture for them. There is no way to convince them and they do not accept comparisons. And even the moderates, their brothers who profess the same religion, are enemies. it is a great danger for the whole world. The final message inherent in my works is the appeal to tolerance, the only possible solution for the problems of our society."

Abdoulaye Konaté, Extract from CLASS n.356, February, 2016



Installation view from
Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition, Primo Marella Gallery, 2015

EL ANATSUI, BARTHÉLÉMY TOGUO & ABDOULAYE KONATÉ
MANCHESTER ART GALLERY

Manchester, 2012



Installation view from Manchester Art Gallery

“HOLLANDAISE”
STEDELIJK MUSEUM

Amsterdam, 3 November 2012 - 6 January 2013

(...) Especially for this exhibition, Konaté made a several-metres-wide work entitled *Fête Africaine, les hommes et les marionnettes*, which – practically at the same time the Afrika Museum acquired *Offrandes de Couleurs* – was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. It is a highly exuberant work, filled with people and mask dancers, made largely of Hollandaise fabric. This work is reminiscent of *négritude*, an attitude and style that thrived in Senegal in particular when the country gained independence.

Poet Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906 - 2001), Senegal's first president (1960 - 1980), propagated the African singularity he wanted to see expressed in the works of contemporary artists. Modern, indeed, but still clearly African in terms of the subject matter and visual language. It was a philosophy that a good friend of his, Iba Ndiaye, had doubts about. He warned that artists could easily end up finding themselves locked up in an exotic garden. When considering that Western artists let themselves be inspired by African art, why should African artists be forced to assume a contrived identity? “Why can't an African artist be inspired by Rembrandt or Van Gogh in the same way?”. Konaté is, as we have seen, an artist with an international outlook. *Fête Africaine* is, for him, an exceptional return to a typically African depiction of a typically African scene. The fact that his creation was made using Dutch textile that is considered typically African adds an ironic touch. Does the exotic garden actually exist? Everyone can, after all, ‘shop’ in any culture at will. Doesn't the Hollandaise fabric smack of ‘typically African?’ Well then, Konaté fulfils the Dutch expectation in the same way as the Dutch textile manufacturer fulfils the African expectation.

Its acquisition by the Stedelijk Museum marks the definitive breakthrough of transcultural art. Until fairly recently, it would have been unthinkable for a West African artist to be included in the collection of a prominent art museum with a work like this one, which these institutes used to label ‘non-Western’ and consign to the periphery. This centre/periphery dichotomy is a thing of past. The West is no longer the sole benchmark. Little by little, the art world has come to realise that there are multiple (art) histories, and that these are directly or indirectly interlinked. The works of Konaté fit in that new global perspective. He enters the Stedelijk with a knowing wink. In this context, his playful treatment of cliché is not as innocent as it may initially seem.

Extract from Wouter Welling essay: “*The World in Textile: Abdoulaye Konaté's global perspective*”, published in the catalogue “*Abdoulaye Konaté: The World in Textile*”, November 2013, Afrika Museum of Berg en Dal in collaboration with Primo Marella Gallery Milan



Fête Africaine (les hommes et les marionnettes)
2012, dyed textile, 215 x 700 cm
as exhibited at 'Hollandaise' Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam, 2012
Courtesy Stedelijk Museum Collection, Amsterdam

“ABDOULAYE KONATÉ: THE WORLD IN TEXTILE”
AFRIKA MUSEUM

Berg en Dal, November 2013



Installation view from Afrika Museum Berg en Dal
Abdoulaye Konaté, The World in Textile, 2013

TIBET

Courtesy Sigg Collection



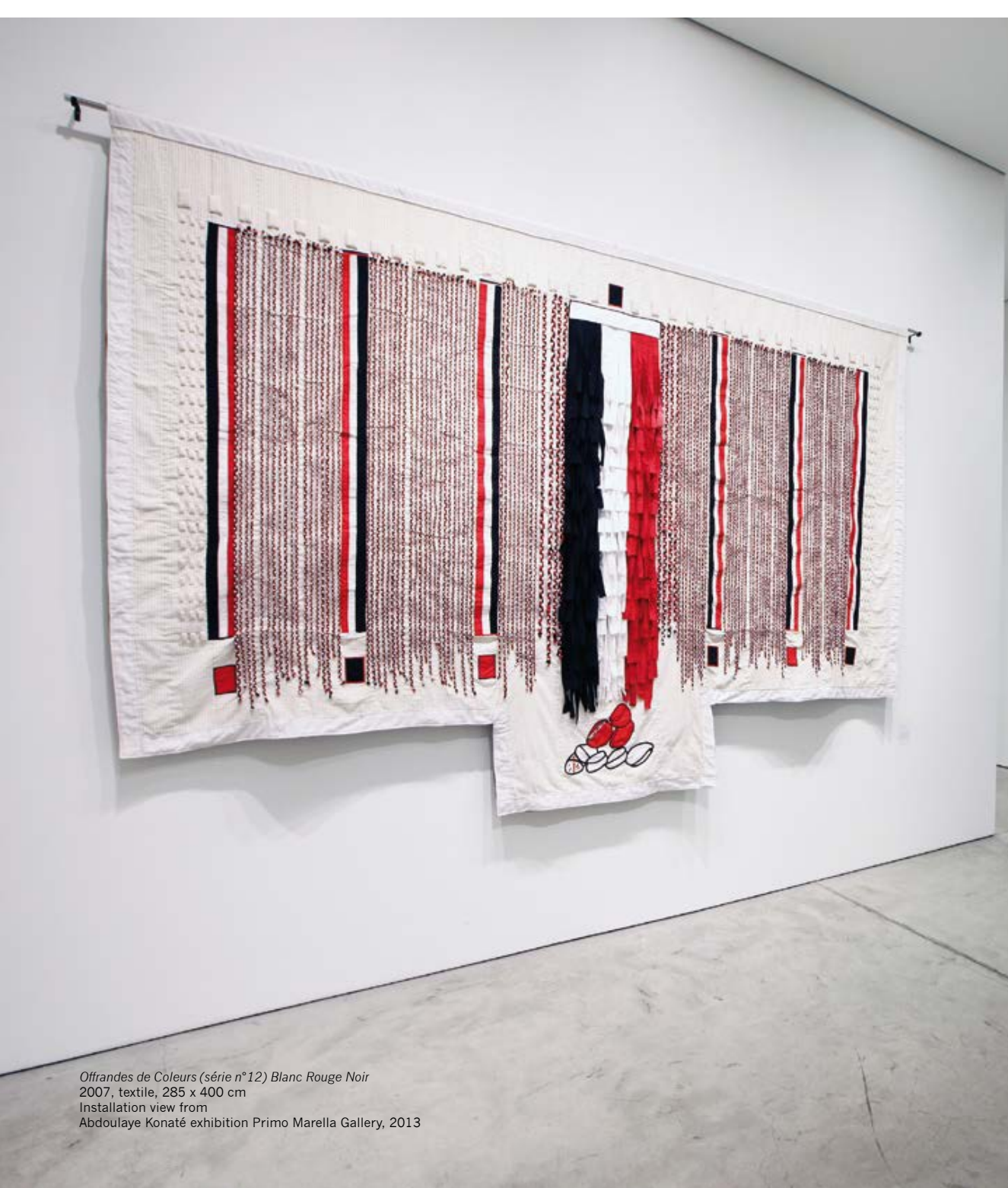
*«The ultimate message for me is the call for tolerance.
To encourage men to understand and accept each other.
This is the only possible solution to the problems of our
society».*

Abdoulaye Konaté

Tibet (triptych)

2013, textile, 237 x 480 cm

Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition,
Primo Marella Gallery, 2013



OFFRANDES DE COULEURS

Courtesy Afrika Museum Collection, Berg en Dal

Offrandes de Couleurs is not only the title of one of his works, it is a running theme throughout Konaté's oeuvre. He devoted a series of textile works to this theme that are very different from *Offrandes de Couleurs*.

All they have in common with *Offrandes de Couleurs* are the colours red, black and white, as well as, in part, the use of a relief structure that alludes to gris gris. The depictions are abstract and rhythmic.

Extract from Tessa Jackson Essay for Norrköping, 2014

Offrandes de Couleurs (série n°12) Blanc Rouge Noir
2007, textile, 285 x 400 cm
Installation view from
Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition Primo Marella Gallery, 2013

GRIS GRIS BLANC

Courtesy Private Collection

In *Gris Gris Blanc (avec Personage)* (2015), a two element work, Abdoulaye Konaté uses material in a different way. The wall hanging reflects a hunter's tunic laid flat and the second part, another tunic, is presented on a figure dummy. The white fabric of both is decorated with gris-gris, reminiscent of the small amulets sewn onto the Bamana hunter's tunic in order to ward off evil and danger. These gris-gris or pouches often contain soil or medicinal plants to provide protection, here they are left empty and are symbolic of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual world. As they give the hunter power, they confer power onto the work.

This new work, presented in two parts, with its absence of colour and use of symbolic amulets becomes metaphorical; its stylised quality alludes to rather than expresses its cultural heritage. The wall piece, like a figure with outstretched arms, has an abstract aesthetic; the figure makes closer reference to the hunter with his coat and hat. The artist's use of abstraction is reminiscent to that of a painter. For Konaté aesthetics are always considered, he uses them to blend the symbols and material of his Malian heritage with a more intellectual and associative approach. Is the artist reminding us, in our fast moving technologically orientated world, that art is a vital site for necessary spiritual reflection and enquiry? In mocking up a figure as part of *Gris Gris Blanc (avec Personage)*, he seems to suggest that we must keep alive our spiritual heritage as well as our physical heritage.

Extract from Tessa Jackson Essay for Norrköping, 2014



Gris Gris Blancs (avec personnage)
2013, textile, 294 x 506 cm
Installation view from

Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition, Primo Marella Gallery, 2015 101

KORÉ DOUGAW (MALI)

Courtesy Golinelli Collection



Koré Dougaw (Mali)

2013, textile, 250 x 600 cm

Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté exhibition
Primo Marella Gallery, 2013

DAK'ART BIENNALE

Dakar, May 2014

The whole work of Konaté is a cohesive thought, global, with internal connections. The artist's interest is condensed in a very personal writing: great allegories related by materials, by the density of color, by the rhythm and the vital impulse, that never staged the physical brutality.



Installation view from
Abdoulaye Konaté, *Manège*, Dakar Biennale, 2014



"This work has two lives.

I considered the first one as completed after the Dakar Biennial in May 2014.

After that I asked the gallery to send it back, to work again on it.

I felt the urgency to improve it.

During the re-elaboration I made few addition of colours such as red, green and yellow. But I especially added gold. Gold, a colour that the Arabic World cannot use anymore."

Abdoulaye Konate in conversation with Riccarda Mandrini



Konaté's studies on peculiar themes of his practice

NÉCROLOGIE ANNONCÉE D'UN FANATISME RELIGIEUX

Courtesy Private Collection



Nécrologie annoncée d'un fanatisme religieux
2014, Textile, 382 x 240 cm

Now displayed on the permanent exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, *Bleu no. 1* is part of a series of labor-intensive assemblages of delicately cut and sewn layered fringes of different lengths presented in a solo exhibition at the 2014 Dakar Biennale. In this intensive exploration of the spectrum of blue tones, Konaté pays tribute to the indigo dye that has been so central to West African aesthetics.

Referencing the limitless sky with its shades of white, violet and deep blue-black, the work also connects to Yves Klein blue (YKB), a shade found in modern European art. Here Konaté, through the intensity of colour, created a work of ethereality and complete abstraction even though indigo, important in West Africa, is also a signifier of wealth, abundance and fertility.



Installation view from
Abdoulaye Konaté, *Manège*, Dakar Biennale, 2014

PERMANENT EXHIBITION
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

New York, USA from 2015



Bleu no. 1

2014, textile, 234 x 368,9 cm

Installation view from the Permanent Collection of Metropolitan
Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2017

Courtesy Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA

"YOU LOVE ME YOU LOVE ME NOT":
THE SINDIKA DOKOLO FOUNDATION EXHIBITION
MUNICIPAL GALLERY ALMEIDA GARRETT

Oporto, 5 March – 10 May 2015



Installation view from: "You love me You love me not"
The Sindika Dokolo Foundation exhibition
Municipal Gallery Almeida Garrett, Oporto, 2015



FONDATION SINDIKA DOKOLO
PALACIO DE FERRO

Luanda, October 2015

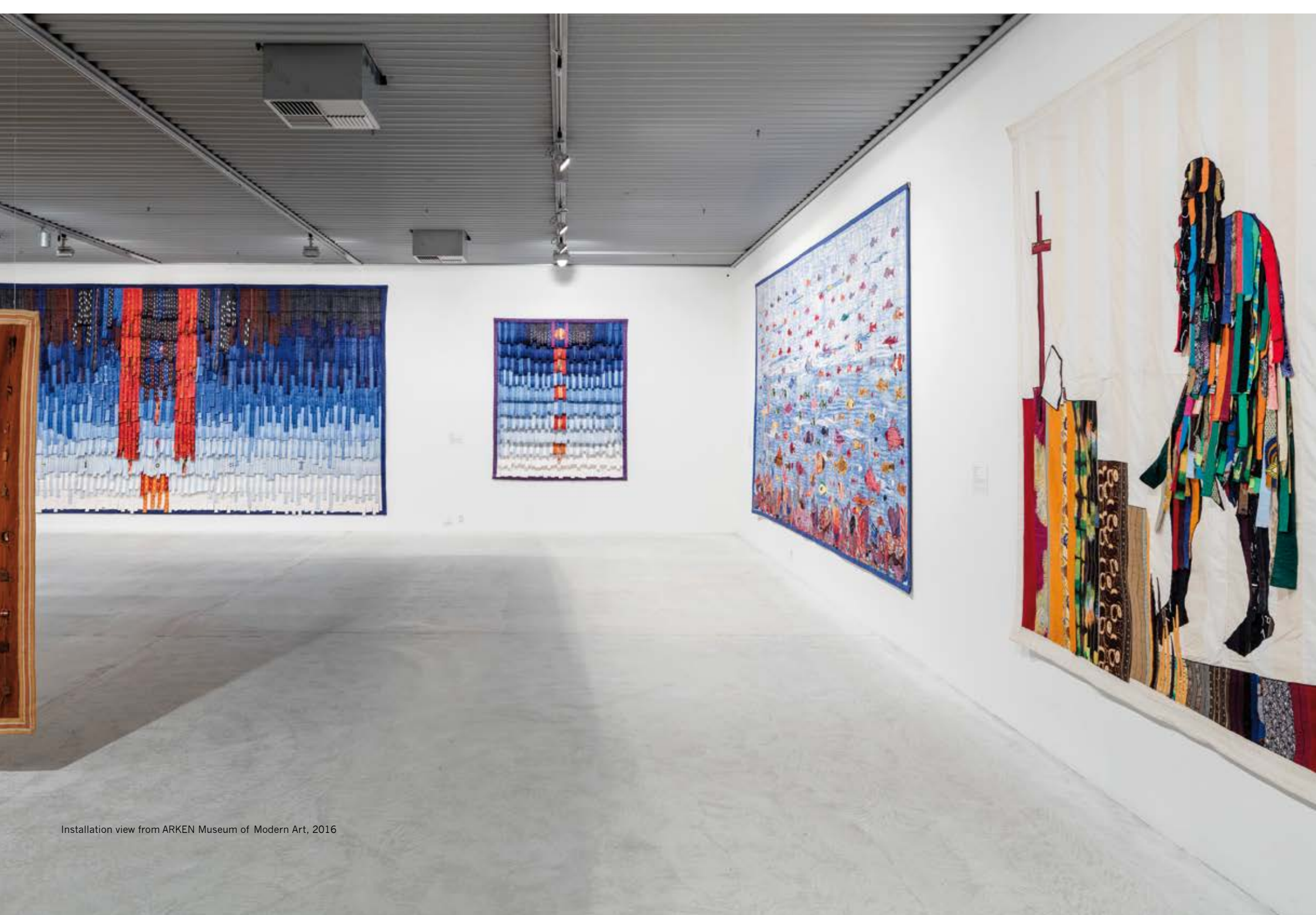


L'initiation, 2004
7 elements. mixed media on fabric
Installation view from Fondation Sindika Dokolo, Palacio de Ferro, Luanda, 2015
Courtesy Fondation Sindika Dokolo

ARKEN MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Copenhagen, 21 April 2016 – 18 September 2016

**ABDOULAYE
KONATÉ**

Installation view from ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, 2016



Installation view from ARKEN Museum of Modern Art, 2016

DAK'ART BIENNALE, EFFAGE

Dakar, May 2016



Installation view from
Abdoulaye Konaté, *Effage*, Dakar Biennale, 2016

AFRIQUE CAPITALES - METROPOLIS
GRANDE HALLE DE LA VILLETTE

Paris, March 23th until May 21st 2017

The Aleppo tragedy: the images from the besieged city have been shocking - even by the standards of Syria's horrific war. For the past several months, the internet has been filled with ghastly images of dust-laden corpses half-buried in the remains of bombedout buildings, Syrian civilians killed in the latest round of bombardment by Russian and Syrian forces. Hospitals and medical aid workers have been the targets of Russian and Syrian government attacks.

With hospitals destroyed and healthcare workers killed during this latest offensive, many of the 850 wounded civilians - 261 of them children - are expected to die from untreated wounds. Injured and sick civilians are unable to leave the city to receive care elsewhere.

This latest siege underlines the tragedy that is Aleppo - and the urgent need for action.

Current conditions in Aleppo are the dramatic manifestations of the most recent, visible horrors we are seeing each day in the media. Being a committed artist Abdoulaye Konaté represents in his powerful the Aleppo Tragedy and he expresses also his moral imperative to act. This piece shows an element Abdoulaye was adopting in his language previously: the bar code. Here bar code & identification data - like physical and biological marks - observed as the trace of an animal following hunters' footprints, in order to keep a person under constant surveillance with technological devices more or less visible.



Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté in *Metropolis - Afrique Capitales*, Grande Halle de la Villette, 2017

Alep
2017, textile, 236 x 346 cm



Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté in
Afrique Capitales - Vers Le Cap De Bonne Esperance
Gare De Saint Saver, Lille, 2017

AFRIQUES CAPITALES - VERS LE CAP DE BONNE ESPERANCE GARE DE SAINT SAVEUR

Lille, April 6 until September 23, 2017

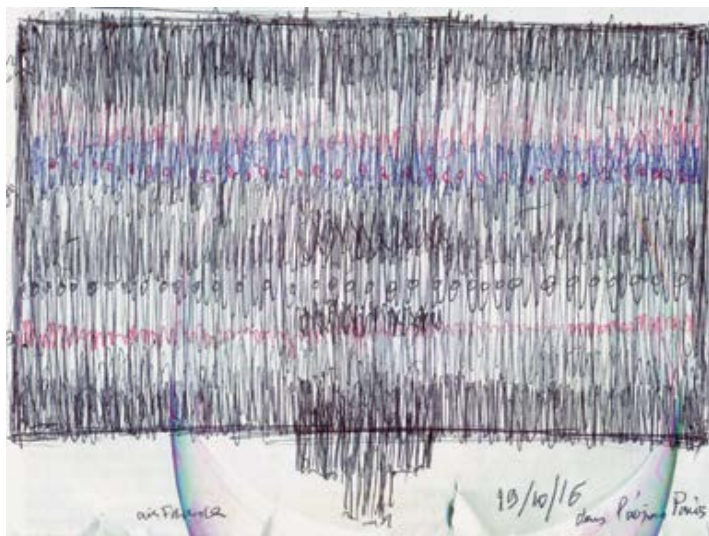
If we look at the piece titled “Calao” we can see several important references to Abdoulaye Konaté language, such as his interest in the local history and culture that he transforms into universal knowledge. This piece offers a tribute to the Sénoufos, a population leaving in West Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali and in Ivory Coast. The Senoufos occupy a territory which, according to legend, was previously populated by the “Mandébélés”. The Mandébélés were a traveling people who lived on hunting (in particular, elephant hunting), while at the same time cultivating. The Mandébélés had a decisive influence on the Sénoufos in two aspects: agriculture and the education system, since, without giving up hunting activities, the Senoufos would have, like the Mandébélés, to cultivate millet and eventually settled in.

The Mandébélés had also a secret language, the “tiga” they taught to their children, but they did not have access their initiatory ceremonies until the adulthood. This secret language was then revealed to the Sénoufos, and from then on the Mandébélés did not feel safe any more as the Senoufo had better hunting equipment because they had iron weapons. And thus they took all the game. Then, the Mandébélés sought refuge in the bush and disappeared.

Since then they are said to live on the trees and have the ability to make themselves invisible. They became the “genii of the forest.” The Senoufo then took advantage of this vacuum to take over the virgin lands, and their migrations spread over three centuries, in view of the long distances they had to travel.

Calao (The Hornbill) is the primordial bird of the Senoufos: it is the protector par excellence, its bulging belly makes it a symbol of fertility, it represents and evokes the prosperity. It carries the souls of the dead into the other world and is generally used in the initiatory rites of the Poro.

Beyond fertility, the hornbill contains three great notions characterizing the Senoufos: its broad back means that it protects posterity, its big belly is the symbol of the one who knows a lot but who does not say a word. The long, pointed beak represents the one who speaks little but it is also the expression of one who speaks only to commit himself and this commitment is a symbol of determination.



First sketch for the work Calao, 2016

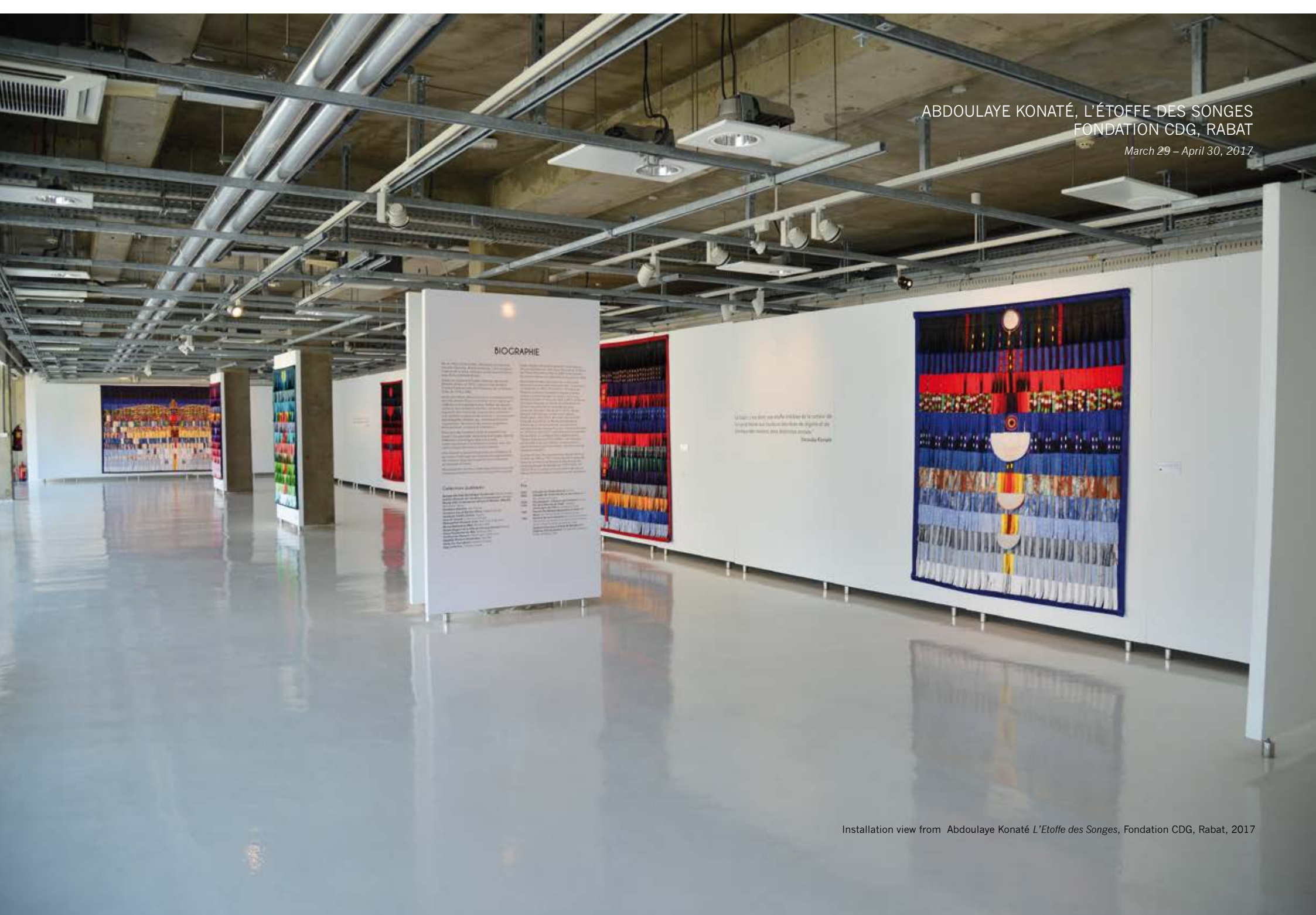


Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté in *Afrique Capitales - Vers Le Cap De Bonne Esperance*
Gare De Saint Saver, Lille, 2017

Calao
2016, textile, 394 x 263 cm

ABDOULAYE KONATÉ, L'ÉTOFFE DES SONGES
FONDATION CDG, RABAT

March 29 – April 30, 2017



Installation view from Abdoulaye Konaté *L'Étoffe des Songes*, Fondation CDG, Rabat, 2017

« LES ÉCLAIREURS » UN PARCOURS DANS LA COLLECTION
D'ART CONTEMPORAIN AFRICAIN DE JEAN-PAUL BLACHÈRE

Avignon, France May 19, 2017 – January 14, 2018

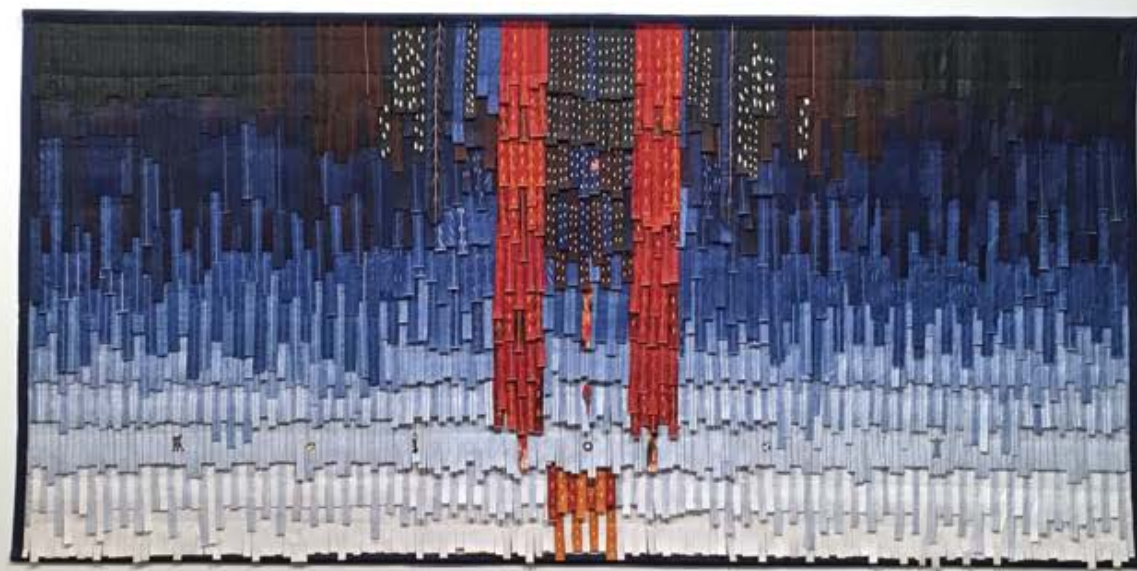


Abdoulaye Konaté, *Les marcheurs*, 2006, textile
Installation view from
Les Éclaireurs. Grand
Tinel, Palais des Papes,
Avignon
Courtesy: Fondation
Blachère



Abdoulaye Konaté, *La zone des grands lacs*, 2005, textile
Installation view from *Les Eclaireurs*, Grand Tinel, Palais des Papes, Avignon
Courtesy: Fondation Blachère

VIVA ARTE VIVA
57A BIENNALE DI VENEZIA
ARSENALE
Venezia 2017



Abdoulaye Konaté, *Brésil (Guarani)*, 2015, textile
Installation view from *Viva Arte Viva*, Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venezia, 2017

The seven-metre long piece displayed in the “Pavilion of Colors” section of the Arsenale (a space dedicated to colors as sources of emotions) is entitled “Brésil” (Guarani).

Indigo, a symbol of Mali and a heavily traded colour during colonial times, is the main shade of this work. The tapestry chronicles the artist’s trip to Amazonia where he recognized cultural similarities between the Guarani People and the Malian Tribes of his native country. The piece also incorporates Brazilian symbols such as the Corcovado Christ of Rio, a small football and a chair by Lina Bo Bardi. This piece is therefore conceived as a sparse diary of an artist’s trip, combining abstract and figurative elements on a large scale work, but it has also got a political value since it reconnects two post-colonial contexts together, hinting at the empowerment of two cultures.



Abdoulaye Konaté, *Brésil (Guarani)*, 2015, textile
Installation view from *Viva Arte Viva*, Biennale di Venezia, Arsenale, Venezia, 2017



Abdoulaye Konaté and Primo Giovanni Marella in front of
Abdoulaye Konaté's artwork presented at the 57th Biennale
di Venezia, Viva Arte Viva curated by Christine Macel

SECOND LIFE
MUSÉE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN AFRICAÏN AL MAADEN (MACAAL)
Marrakech, 2018





Abdoulaye Konaté and Primo Marella during the opening of
"Second Life" at MACAAL, Marrakech, in front of the artwork
Composition en Bleu Abba 1A, 2016, textile 235 x 300 cm

PULLING THREAD
NORVAL FOUNDATION
Cape Town, 28 April - 20 August 2018



Installation view
Liza Lou, *Axis Defeat*, 2007 - 2008 & Abdoulaye Konate, *Composition Bleue avec Orange et Jaune*, 2016
Courtesy of Norval Foundation

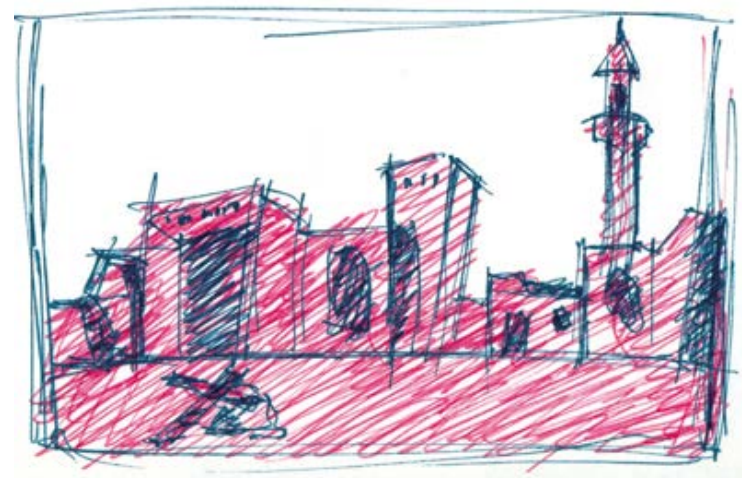
AFRICAN METROPOLIS:
UNA CITTÀ IMMAGINARIA/AN IMAGINARY CITY
MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
Rome, 22 June - 4 November 2018



Installation view from African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria/An Imaginary City, curated by Simon Njami and co curated by Elena Motisi, MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI



Installation view from African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria/An Imaginary City, curated by Simon Njami and co curated by Elena Motisi, MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI



The first sketch for the work *Alep*, 2017



Installation view from African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria/An Imaginary City, curated by Simon Njami and co curated by Elena Motisi, MAXXI | Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo
Courtesy Fondazione MAXXI

RAVELLED THREADS
SEAN KELLY

New York, 22 June - 3 August 2018



Installation view of *Ravelled Threads* at Sean Kelly, New York
Courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York



Installation view of *Ravelled Threads* at Sean Kelly, New York
Courtesy of Sean Kelly, New York

ART FAIRS

SCOPE
Miami
2014



1:54
London
2014



MIART
Milan
2015



1:54
New York
2015



SCOPE
Basel
2015



ARTISSIMA
Turin
2015



ARTEFIERA
Bologna
2016



1:54
London
2016





ARTEFIERA
Bologna
2017



SCOPE
Basel
2017

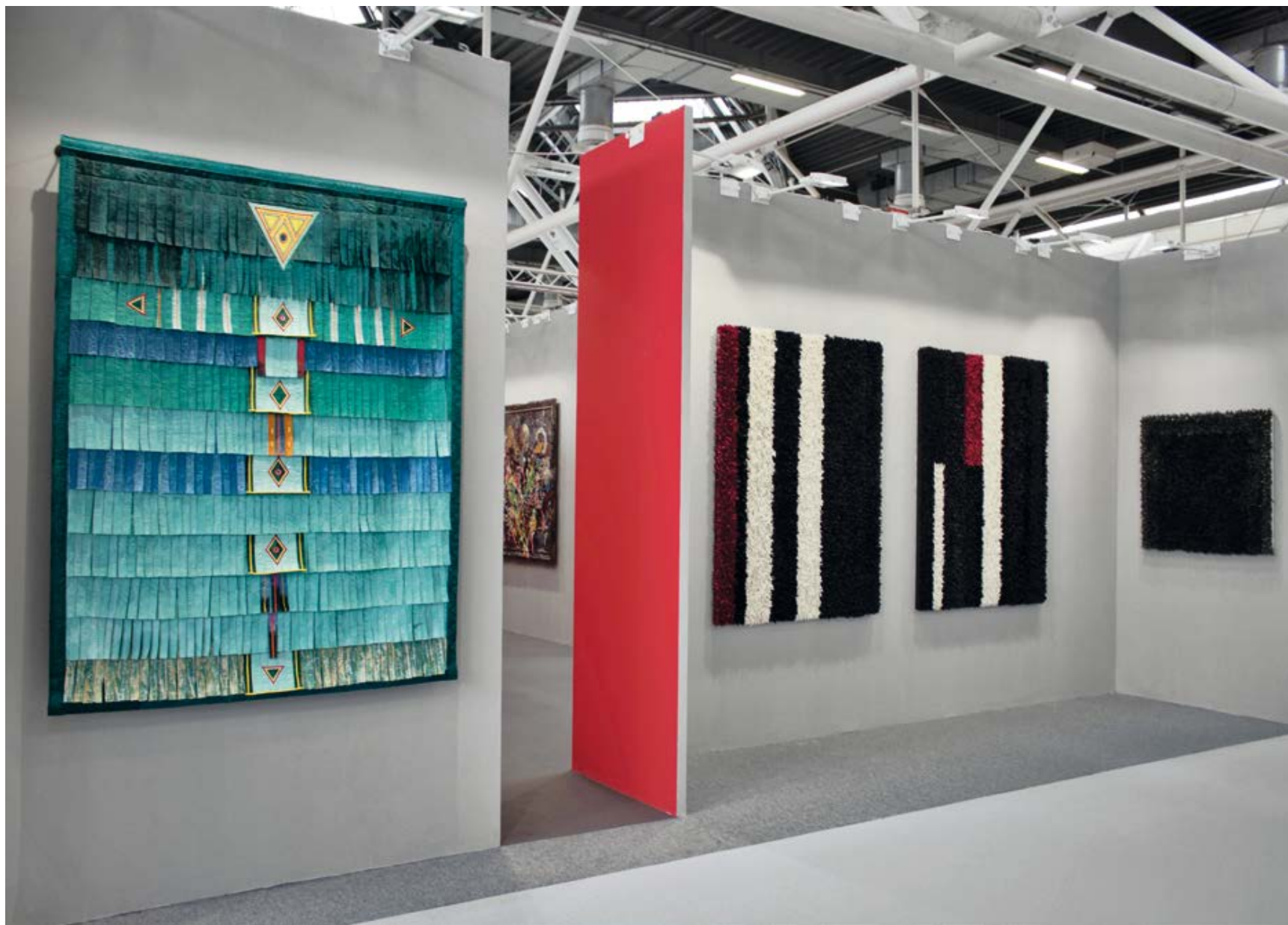


ART PAMPELONNE
Saint Tropez
2017





1:54
London
2017



ARTEFIERA
Bologna
2018

CTAF
Cape Town
2018



1:54
Marrakech
2018



SPECIAL ENCOUNTERS & EVENTS



Primo Marella with Marino and Paola Golinelli in front of the artwork *Power and Religion* during the exhibition “*Abdoulaye Konaté*”, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan



Conference “Abdoulaye Konaté: Arte in Africa che si oppone al fondamentalismo” encounter with the artist and the curator Cristina Perrella at Opificio Golinelli, organized by Golinelli Foundation



Laetitia Catoir, Abdoulaye Konaté, and Primo Giovanni Marella
on the Peggy Guggenheim terrace for the special event organized in occasion of Abdoulaye Konaté
presentation at the 57th Biennale di Venezia, *Viva Arte Viva*



Ouattara Watts, Abdoulaye Konaté, Jerns Robert Koko Bi, Yakouba Konaté and Primo Giovanni Marella,
in front of Abdoulaye Konaté's artwork presented at the 57th Biennale di Venezia, *Viva Arte Viva*

PARIS
October 2017



Abdoulaye Konaté and Uli Sigg

MILAN
November 2017



Abdoulaye Konaté in conversation with Riccarda Mandrini

TURIN

2017

Private collection



MILAN

2018

Fattore K, Krizia



KUALA LUMPUR

2018

Richard Koh Fine Art



Installation view from Richard Koh Fine Art, 2-28 February, 2018
Courtesy Richard Koh Fine Art

BIOGRAPHY



ABDOULAYE KONATÉ

Born in 1953 in Diré, Mali, Abdoulaye Konaté studied painting at the Institut National des Arts in Bamako and then at the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana, Cuba. He is the founder and currently General Director of the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia Balla Fasseké Kouyaté in Bamako, Mali. He currently lives and works in Bamako.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 2018 Abdoulaye Konaté, Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, ML
- 2017 Solo Show, Musée Mohamed VI, Rabat, Morocco
- 2016 Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, CH
Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, IT
Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, Copenhagen, DK
- 2015 Abdoulaye Konaté, Norrköping Konstmuseum, Norrköping, SW
Abdoulaye Konaté, Primo Marella Gallery, Milano, IT
Southern Panoramas, 19th Festival Contemporary Art Festival, San Paolo, BR
- 2013 The World in Textile, Afrika Museum, Berg En Dal, NL
Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, IT
- 2012 ESADHar · L'Ecole Supérieure D'Art & Design, Le Havre, F
Project Window, Iniva, Rivington Place, London, UK
Fondation Festival sur le Niger, Ségou, RMM
Tentures Teintures, Maison de la Revue Noire, Paris, F
- 2011 La Toile de Abdoulaye Konaté, Galerie National de Dakar, Dakar, SN
- 2010 Exposition Rétrospective, Biennale de Dakar, Dakar, SN
- 2009 Textile, Forum für Kunst, Heidelberg, D
Le Temps de Danse, Galerie Saro, Las Palmas, E
- 1992 Musée National du Mali, Bamako, RMM
Musée de l'IFAN, Dakar, SN
- 1983 Le Petit Salon National, Havana, C
- 1976 Maison du Peuple, Diré, RMM

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (SELECTED)

- 2018 African Metropolis. An imaginary City, MAXXI, Rome, IT
Ravelled Threads, Sean Kelly, New York, USA
Pulling Thread, Norval Foundation, Cape Town
- 2017 VIVA ARTE VIVA, 57a Biennale di Venezia, IT
La Sfinge Nera: dal Marocco al Madagascar, Primo Marella Gallery, Milano, IT
Il Cacciatore Bianco (The White Hunter), Frigoriferi Milanesi, Milano, IT
Afriques Capitales, Grand Halles de la Villette, Parigi, FR
Vers le Cap de Bonne-Espérance, Lille, FR
- 2016 Still (the) Barbarians. EVA International Ireland's Biennale, Cleeve's Condensed Milk Factory, Limerick City, IRL
Abdoulaye Konaté et le Mali, Effage, Dakar, SN
Afterwork, Para Site Hong Kong, HK; tours to Kuala Lumpur, MY
- 2015 Streamlines: Oceans, Global Trade And Migration, The Hall For Contemporary Art, Hambourg, D
Lumières D'Afrique, Palais Chaillot, Paris, F
ART_TEXTURE, The Whitworth, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
19th Contemporary Art Festival Sesc_videobrasil, Southern Panoramas, Sao Paulo, BR
Streamlines: Metaphorical and Geopolitical Interpretations of the Oceans, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, D
International Kunst und Fotografie, Hamburg, D
Obsession, Maison Particulière, Brussels, B
Katrine Helmersson and Abdoulaye Konaté., Norrköping Konstmuseum, Norrköping, S
- 2014 The Divine Comedy: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory revisited by Contemporary African Artists: Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, D, SCAD, Savannah (2014-2015) US, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, US (2015)
- 2013 Métamorphoses, Musée Bargoin, Clermont Ferrand, F
Marker 2013, Madinat Jumeriah, Dubai, UAE
Decorum, Musée de Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, F
International Sculpture Route Amsterdam Art Zuid 2013, Amsterdam, NL
- 2012 Hollandaise, SMBA, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL
We face forward: Art from West Africa today, Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester, UK

- Raw Material Company, centre pour L'Art, le Savoir et la Société, Dakar, SN
Hollandaise, RAW Material Company, Dakar, SN
- 2011 Mixités, Les chantiers de la Lune, La Seyne-sur-Mer, F
Dégagements... La Tunisie un an après, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, F
- 2010 Art Actuel d'Afrique, Collégiale Saint-André, Chartres, F
Textile ou fragment de l'histoire d'une collection, Fondation Blachère, Apt, F
- 2009 Africa? Una Nuova Storia. Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome, IT
Biennale de La Habana, Havana, C
- 2008 Artes Mundi, National Museum, Cardiff, IRL
- 2007 Africa Remix, Museum Kunstpalast, Dusseldorf, D
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, F
Hayward Gallery, London, UK
Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, JP
Universes in Universe, Documenta 12, Kassel, D
- 2006 The Unhomely, Phantom Scenes in Global Society, Biennale Internazionale de Arte Contemporáneo de Sevilla, E
Dak'Art 7ème Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain, catalogue, Dakar, SN
- 2003 Musée de design et d'arts appliqués contemporains de Lausanne, CH
Le Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, B
- 2002 Musée de Picardie, Amiens, F
- 1998 Routes of Passage, Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg, ZA
Former West, 24th Biennale São Paulo, Sao Paulo, BR
7th Triennale der Kleinplastik, Stuttgart, D
- 1997 Die Anderen Modernen, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, D
- 1996 The Other Journey, Kunsthalle Krems, Krems A
- 1995 Rencontres Africaines, Caixa General de Deposito, Lisbon, P
African art of our time: an inside story, Setagaya Museum, Tokyo, JP
- 1994 Rencontres africaines, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, F
- 1986 Artistes Maliens et Soviétiques au Palais de la Culture, Palais de la Culture, Bamako, RMM
- 1984 Biennale de La Havane, Institut Supérieur des Arts, La Havane, C
- 1978 Jeunes Peintres du Mali, Institut National des Arts, Bamako, RMM

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Metropolitan Museum, New York, US
Smithsonian Museum, Washington, US
Uli Sigg Collection, Schloss, CH
Fondation Guy & Myriam Ullens, Geneva, CH
Fondation Blachère, Apt, F
Collection of Stichting Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, NL
Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, NL
Tiroche DeLeon Collection, Jaffa, IL
Vehbi Koc Foundation, Istanbul, TR
Arken Museum, Copenhagen, DK
Golinelli Collection, Bologna, IT
Collection de la Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Occidentale, Dakar, SN
Fundação Sindika Dokolo, ANG
Maison Particulière, Bruxelles, B
Gare do Oriente, Lisbon, P
Collection du Musée National du Mali, Bamako, RMM
Collection du Musée Bargoin de la Ville de Clermont-Ferrand, F
Collection du Palais Présidentiel du Mali, Bamako, RMM
Dak'Art, Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain, SN

AWARDS

- 2009 Officier de l'Ordre National du Mali, RMM
- 2008 Prix passeport - Créateurs sans Frontières, F
- 2002 Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mali, RMM
Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de la République Française, F
- 1996 Leopold Sedar Senghor Prix, Dak'Art Biennale, Dakar, SN
- 1986 Mention aux Journées des Etudes Scientifiques
Universitaire de l'ISA de La Havane, C
- 1985 Premier Prix National de peinture du Salon 13 Marzo de l'Université de La Havane, C
- 1983 Diplôme de reconnaissance de l'Institut Supérieur des Arts de La Havane à l'occasion de la Semaine de la Culture Cubaine, C
- 1982 Mention aux journées d'Etudes Scientifiques Universitaires de l'Institut Supérieur des Arts de La Havane, C
- 1976 Premier Prix du "Lion's Club International", Bamako, RMM



Omage to a newborn collector,
Matilde and Konaté welcome home!

