

Abu Bakarr Mansaray

Born 1970, Tongo, Sierra Leone
Lives and works in Freetown, Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in western Africa; in choosing a career as an artist Mansaray has laboured to stem the collapse of a nation drained by civil war. After leaving school in 1987, he settled in Freetown, where he became a voracious autodidact, studying all aspects of practical science and engineering. He revived a technique especially popular in central Africa of manufacturing decorative objects or toys out of wire and iron. But he applied an extreme form of this technique to build futuristic machines for extravagant purposes, creating contraptions that could produce fire, light, air, water, cold, motion, and sound. "I am an artist making creations without limitation. I do drawings, paintings, sculptures . . . I also invent machines for my own use at home and sometimes for other people," he has proclaimed.

Mansaray's preparatory drawings also stand as independent artworks. These studies consist of detailed calculations, sketches, diagrams, and commentaries executed in pencil, ballpoint pen, and crayons. "I like doing strange, complicated drawings and designing intricate machines inspired by scientific ideas that are at times beyond the human imagination (for example, the machines I designed called Hell Extinguisher and Nuclear Telephone Discovered in Hell). . . . I want people to feel the power of creation." No doubt the economic, political and social situation in Sierra Leone, a country where war has left behind nothing but ruins and charred bodies, has shaped Mansaray's imagination and the inspiration. In 1998 he managed to escape his country under extremely difficult circumstances; however, his work continues to bear witness to the horrors of war.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019

Rothko in Lampedusa, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Palazzo Querini, Venice

2018

Afro-Tech and the Future of Re-invention, Begleitheft zur Ausstellung, Exhibition Booklet, HMKV Hartware Medien Kunst Verein, Dortmund, Germany

Design Histories between Africa and Europe. Flow of Forms / Forms of Flow, Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg, Germany

2017

Art/Afrique : le nouvel atelier _ The Insiders : a selection of works (1989 to 2009) from the Jean Pigozzi collection of contemporary African Art, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France

Flow of Forms / Forms of Flow, Institut d'histoire de l'art, Louis-et-Maximilien University, Munich, Germany

AFRICA. Raccontare un mondo, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milano, Italy

2016

Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism, Art Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel

2015

56ème Biennale de Venise, All the world's futures, Venice, Italy

2014

Here Africa, Musée des Suisses dans le Monde, Geneva, Switzerland

2010

African Stories, Ancienne Banque du Maroc, Marrakech, Morocco

ARTPARIS+GUESTS. André Magnin & Leridon Collection, Grand Palais, Paris, France

ACM, Mansaray, Rigo 23 & Volyazlovsky, Andrew Edlin Gallery, New York, USA

2009

Insiders, CAPC, Bordeaux, France

Africa ? Una nuova storia, Complesso del Vittoriano, Roma, Italy

2007

Why Africa ? La collezione Pigozzi, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Torino, Italy

2006

100% Africa, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain

2005/2006

African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection

Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, USA National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA

2005

Arts of Africa, The Contemporary collection of Jean Pigozzi, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco

2004/2007

Africa Remix

Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany

Hayward Gallery, London, UK

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2000
Partage d'Exotismes, Biennale d'art contemporain, Lyon, France

FAIRS

2016
Independent, Brussels, Belgium

2013
1:54 Contemporary Art Fair, London, UK
Art Paris Art Fair, Paris, France

2014
Art Genève, Switzerland
Fiac Officielle, Paris, France
Drawing Now, Carreau du Temple, Paris

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2018
Design Histories between Africa and Europe, flow of forms, forms of flow, Kerstin Pinther, Alexandra Weigand (eds.) Museum für Völkerkunde
Hamburg, Allemagne, Transcript Design

2017
Essentiel Paysage - Artistes Contemporains Africains face à l'environnement, catalogue d'exposition, Fondation Alliances, Musée MACAAL, sous la
direction de Brahim Alaoui, p. 159