

## Monsengo Shula

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Born in 1959, Nioki, Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Lives and works in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo

As the majority of "popular" artists from Kinshasa, his talent for drawing unveiled early. Shula started at the age of 15 as his cousin assistant, the well known Moke, the godfather of the "popular painting" and a colourist master. He is one of those that thinks that their narrative paintings directly stemmed from everyday life must be critical, condemn political unfairness, bring awareness and educate the population. This is the reason why all his paintings suggest the message. "Painters are useful because they say out loud what others think to themselves".

Shula distinguishes himself from the other "popular painters" such as Moke, Chéri Samba, Chéri Chérin. His characteristic combination of colours provides to his paintings an effect of unreal, as if he managed to overcome reality. The theme of his recent paintings brings a new perspective to global problems such as global warming, international policy and the relationship of mankind with technology.

"The artist shows his singularity in 2012 when he chooses to depict the technological mutations of the world and the growing robotization. With a surrealist humor that evokes the Chaplin of Modern Times, he paints the processed man, transformed into a simple wheel of a complex mechanism, dislocated and connected puppets. We are however far from the darkness of the movie Matrix. Shula's characters are consenting slaves of digital communication. "Men think of machines as a friend, but it is a mistake" he regrets. "Do you find it normal that a woman and a man meeting in a restaurant spend their time on their phones without talking to each other? My son is always wearing his earphones. I am also in front of my computer or Euronews. We can't be stuck at the Stone Age nor go back, but we need safeguards. It is very troubling to live in a world in which fiction and reality intertwine."

Perfectly constructed, his paintings can be distinguished by a cold set of colors, accentuated by the prevailing of a cobalt blue color, almost like a television. Shula intends to explore the question of smart houses, managed by computer systems. Future or fantasy? It doesn't matter. His eye is greedy: he knows that he found an inexhaustible source."

Le Monde  
Roxana Azimi  
Written on September 7, 2015

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2020-2021  
Welcome home II, MACAAL, Marrakech

2018  
Congo Stars, Kunsthau Graz, Austria (curators: Sammy Baloji, Bambi Ceuppens, Fiston Mwanz Mujila, Günther Holler-Schuster, Barbara Steiner)

2015  
1:54, Contemporary African Art Fair, London, UK  
1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, New York, USA  
Beauté Congo - Congo Kitoko, Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris, France (curator: André Magnin)

2013  
KIN-BABI, Galerie Cécile Fakhoury, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

2011  
JapanCongo, Double regard de Carsten Höller sur la collection de Jean Pigozzi,  
Le Magasin, Grenoble, France (curator: Yves Aupetitallot)  
The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow, Russia

2009  
Africa Arte Contemporanea, JZ Art Gallery, Milan

2007  
Le Congo d'aujourd'hui et de demain, Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles, Kinshasa, RDC

2005  
Portraits of women from Bible, Paris, France  
Peinture Populaire du Congo et Haïti, Museum of Haïtien art, Port-Au-Prince, Haïti

2003  
Visage d'Afrique, Galerie Mots et Tableaux, Brussels, Belgium  
Kin moto na Bruxelles, Hôtel de Ville, Brussels, Belgium

2001  
La cité dans la peinture populaire de Kinshasa  
Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium  
Centre Culturel Ku Ntwala, Kinshasa, RDC  
AAPPO : L'union fait la force, Galerie Marc Dengis, Brussels, Belgium  
Association des Artistes Peintres de style populaire - Ecole du Congo

## Collections

Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain