

Chéri Samba

Born in 1956, Kinto M'Vuila, Democratic Republic of Congo
Lives and works in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

In 1972 Chéri Samba left school in order to become a sign painter on Kasa Vubu Avenue in Kinshasa. From this circle of artists (which included Moke, Bodo, and later Samba's younger brother Cheik Ledy) arose one of the most vibrant schools of popular painting of the twentieth century. Working both as a billboard painter and a comic strip artist, Samba employed the conventions of both genres when he began making paintings on sackcloth (canvas being too expensive) in 1975. Indeed, he borrowed the bubbles from the comics in order to incorporate in his paintings not only narrative but also comments. Samba has recalled how he came to use text in these paintings: "I had noticed that people in the street would walk by my paintings, glance at them and keep going. I thought that if I added a bit of text, people would have to stop and take time to read, to get more into the painting and admire it. That's what I called the 'Samba signature'. Since then I put text in all my paintings." In the early 1980s he began signing his paintings 'Chéri Samba: Artiste Populaire'. Indeed, the popularity of his paintings soon went beyond Kinshasa's borders. By the mid 1980s his work was gaining an international audience.

Samba's paintings of this period reveal his perception of the social, political, economic and cultural realities of Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), with subject such as everyday life in Kinshasa, customs, sexuality, AIDS, social inequalities, and corruption. Samba explained, "My painting is concerned with people's lives. I'm not interested in myths or beliefs. That's not my goal. I want to change our mentality that keeps us isolated from the world. I appeal to people's consciences. Artists must make people think." Since the late 1980s on, he became the main subject of his paintings. For Samba, this is not an act of narcissism but the narrative of a successful African artist in the art world.

Find out the interview of Chéri Samba by CHOICES, 2017

SOLO SHOWS

2005
J'aime Chéri Samba: A selection of paintings from the exhibition at the Fondation Cartier, Texas Southern University, Houston, USA
Les débuts de Chéri Samba, Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany

2004/2007
Chéri Samba, Corso Venezia 10, Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy

2004
J'aime Chéri Samba, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, France

2003
Chéri Samba moto na Tervuren, Musée royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium

1998
Chéri Samba : Tableaux récents, MAMCO, Genève, Switzerland
Chéri Samba, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Stuttgart, Germany
1997/1998
Chéri Samba, Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris, France

1997
Chéri Samba, Übersee Museum, Bremen, Germany

1991
Chéri Samba, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Etats Unis
Chéri Samba, Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany
Formas de dissidencià : Chéri Samba, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain

1990/1991
Chéri Samba: le peintre populaire du Zaïre
Provinciaal Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Ostende, Belgium
Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England

1984
Chéri Samba, French Cultural Center, Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019
Truth Tellers, Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York City, USA

2018
Africa Passions, Evora Africa, art and music festival, Palais Cadaval, Portugal
Reading Walking. Louis Vuitton Travel Book, Pearl Art Museum, Shanghai, China

Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, A Beautiful Elsewhere, Power
Station of Art (PSA), Shanghai, China
From Vietnam to Berlin, Asia Culture Institute, Gwangju, South Korea
Quel Amour !?, MAC, Marseille, France
African Passions, Palais Cadaval, Evora, Portugal
Louis Vuitton Travel Book, Pearl Art Museum, Shanghai, China

2017

Highlights, Collection of the Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art at Museum of Art (SeMA), Korea
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
On aime l'art...!! Un choix d'Éric Mézil parmi les oeuvres de la Collection agnès b., Collection Lambert en Avignon, France
E-Mois, MACAAL, Marrakech, Morocco
Gaïa à travers ses miroirs, Villa des Arts, Rabbat, Maroc (dans le cadre de l'évènement L'Afrique en Capitale)
Histoires congolaises, bibliothèque Robert-Desnos, Montreuil, France
AFRICA. Raccontare un mondo, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milano, Italy

2016

Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism, Art Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel
L'instance de la lettre, Au Médicis, Galerie Marguerite Milin, Paris, France
Congo Art Works. Popular Painting, Bozar, Brussels, Belgium
Essentiel Paysage, Al Maaden Art Gallery, Contemporary African Art Center, Marrakech, Morocco
Vivre !! La collection agnès b. au musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, National Museum of the History of Immigration, Paris, France

2015

Picasso Mania, Grand-Palais, Paris, France
Beauté Congo 1926-2015 Congo Kitoko, Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art, Paris, France
A Brief History of Future, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France

2014

Ici l'Afrique / Here Africa, Château de Penthes, Genva, Switzerland
African way, Chapelle de la Visitation, Thonon-les-Bains, France

2013

Raw Vision, 25 ans d'Art Brut, La Halle Saint Pierre, Paris, France
Peintres reporters de l'urbanité, à Kinshasa, Latitude 21, Dijon, France
Focus sur la collection, Musée de la Fondation Zinsou, Ouidah, Benin
Mehr Licht, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris, France

2012

Afrovision, L'art moderne d'Afrique, Musée d'art moderne, Bakou, Azerbaïdjan
Africa/Africa, Abbaye Saint-André, Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac, France

2011

Riad Al Maaden, MAGNIN-A, Marrakech, Morocco
JapanCongo, Double regard de Carsten Höller sur la collection de Jean Pigozzi
Le Magasin, Grenoble, France
The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscou, Russia
Group Show with Kura Shomali, Billie Zangewa, Hussenot & Magnin-A Galleries, Paris, France

2010

Kinshasa Pop, group show with Pierre Bodo & Moke, Pangée Gallery, Montreal, Canada
African Stories, Marrakech, Morocco

2009/2010

Africa, una nuova storia, Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome, Italie

2009

Against Exclusion, 3rd Moscow Biennial, The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscou, Russia

2007

Think with the Senses Feel with the Mind, 52nd Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy
Black Paris, Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt, Germany

2007/2008

Why Africa ? La collezione Pigozzi, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin, Italy
"Popular Painting" from Kinshasa, Tate Modern, (Room 10), London, England
Intrusions au Petit Palais : le Fonds municipal d'art contemporain, Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France

2006/2007

100% Africa, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain

2006

Collection de la Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, MOT, Tokyo, Japan

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, England
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2004

Je m'installe aux Abattoirs, La collection d'art contemporain d'agnès b., Les Abattoirs, Toulouse, France
Les Afriques, Tri Postal, Lille, France

2003

Africanische Reklamekunst, Iwalewa-Haus, Afrikazentrum der Universität, Bayreuth, Germany
Kin moto na Bruxelles, Town Hall, Brussels, Belgium
Sexuality and death, AIDS in Contemporary African Art, Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Cologne, Germany

2002

Iconografias Metropolitanas, 25ª Bienal Internacional de Arte de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
Kinshasa Congo. Fabien Rigobert / Moke, Chéri Samba, Espace Croisé, Centre d'art contemporain, Roubaix, France
Painting on the Move, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland

2001

An/Sichten: Malerei aus dem Kongo 1990-2000, Museum für Volkerkunde, Vienna, Austria

2000

Kunst Welten im Dialog, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany

1998

Dak'Art 98, Biennale de Dakar, Dakar, Senegal
Africa Africa: Vibrant New Art from a Dynamic Continent, Tobu Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan

1996

Neue Kunst aus Afrika, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany

1995/1996

An Inside Story: African Art of Our Time
Setagawa Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
Tokushima Modern Art Museum, Tokushima, Japan
Himeji City Museum of Art, Himeji, Japan
Koriyama City Museum of Art, Koriyama, Japan
Marugame Genichiro-Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art, Marugame, Japan
Museum of Fine Art, Gifu, Japan

1994

Centre d'Art et de la plaisanterie, Galerie des Extravagances, Monbéliard, France

1993

Africa Art Now: Urban Culture from Africa, Setagaya Museum and The Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan

1991

Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art
Museum for African Art, New York, USA
New Museum for Contemporary Art, New York, USA
Africa Hoy
_Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain
_Groninger Museum, Groningen, Netherlands
_Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, Mexique
60 ans de la peinture zaïroise, Goethe Institut, Kinshasa, République Démocratique du Congo

1989

Magiciens de la terre, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou et Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris, France

1982

Sura dji. Visages et racines du Zaïre, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France

1978

Art Partout, Académie des Beaux-arts, CIAF, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

FAIRS

2019

Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town, South Africa

2017

Art Paris Art Fair, Grand Palais, Paris, France
1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, London, UK

2016

Untitled, Miami, USA
1:54 Foire d'art contemporain africain, New York, USA

2015

FIAC OFFICIELLE, Paris, France
1:54, Contemporary African Art Fair, London, UK
1:54, Contemporary African Art Fair, New-York, USA
Art Genève, Switzerland

2014

FIAC OFFICIELLE, Paris, France

1:54 Foire d'art contemporain africain, London, UK
Art Geneva, Switzerland

2013

1:54 Foire d'art contemporain africain, London, UK
Art Paris Art Fair, Paris, France

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2017 Un collectionneur - Un regard contemporain sur l'art africain, Musée Mohammed VI
d'art moderne et contemporain, Fondation nationale des musées, p. 30
Essentiel Paysage - Artistes Contemporains Africains face à l'environnement, catalogue d'exposition, Fondation Alliances, Musée MACAAL, sous la
direction de Brahim Alaoui, p. 131
Le Guide Hazan de l'art contemporain 2018, Roxana Azimi, Editions Hazan, Paris, p. 164
2015 Beauté Congo 1926-2015 (catalogue), Editions Fondation Cartier, Paris

Collections

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Pompidou, Paris, France
Museum of Modern Art - MoMa, New York, United States
Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, United States
Musée royal d'Afrique centrale, Tervuren, Belgique.
Collection LVMH, Paris, France
Smithsonian Institute, National Museum of African Art, Washington, USA

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Collection LVMH, Paris, France
Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France
CAAC - The Pigozzi Collection, Genève, Suisse
Collection Sindika Dokolo, Luanda, Angola
Fondation Alliances, Marrakech, Morocco
Zeitz Mocaa, Cape Town, South Africa
Collection agnès.b, Paris, France
Collection Lilian Thuram, Paris, France
Collection Farida et Henri Seydoux, Paris, France
Collection Gervanne et Matthias Leridon, Paris, France