

Global Focus

After a show in Paris and with the opening of Zeitz MOCAA, Africa's art renaissance has gone international

By Ivan Fallon, September 12, 2017



John Goba (Sierra Leone) uses porcupine quills to signify protection from evil spirits in his sculptures

The recent exhibition of contemporary African art at Frank Gehry's magnificent Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris (read about it [here](#)) caused quite a stir throughout the art world. Much of the interest centred on the works on loan from the collector Jean Pigozzi, the owner of perhaps the most important private collection of contemporary African art in the world.

Jean first encountered the genre in 1989 at an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, and realised with a shock how 'alive and diverse' it was. He has been an avid collector since, confining himself strictly to black artists who live and work in sub-Saharan Africa. Les Initiés (The Insiders), which ran in Paris from 26 April to 4 September this year, represented 15 of them, the works carefully chosen from the 12 000 he has accumulated with the help of art dealer André Magnin.

The Paris exhibition has fuelled the growing worldwide awareness of the importance of the genre. A renowned curator recently remarked that African art is 'living a moment' not unlike the Renaissance in Italy, and the body of work that made up Les Initiés underlines this. The opening of Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town, which houses the only collection in the world comparable to Jean's, mid September is a major international event which will further raise interest in contemporary African art. Art lovers who do not yet know the genre will be

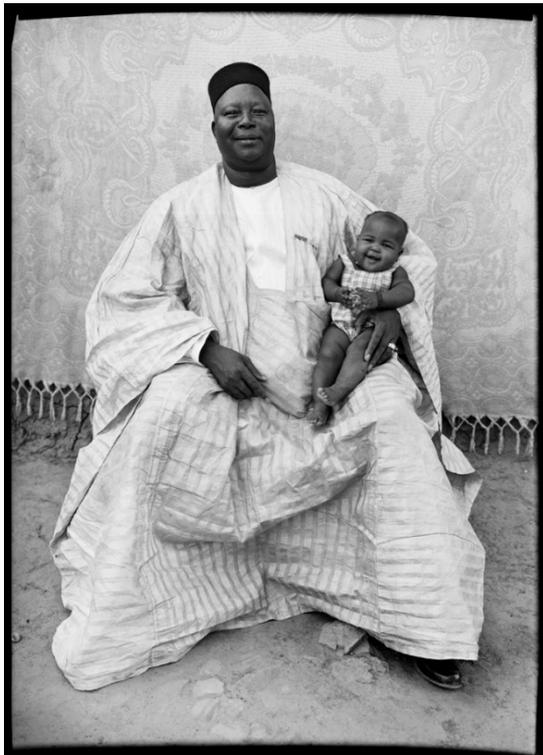
astonished by the power, diversity, imagery, skill and expression of the works on display at the museum. African contemporary art is about to have its day – and it's high time.



Collector Jean Pigozzi (right) with art dealer André Magnin (left) and photographer Seydou Keita



Romuald Hazoumé (Benin) recreates traditional masks using everyday objects and plastic jerrycans



Seydou Keïta (Mali) captured Malian youth in the mid 1900s in his black and white portraits

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