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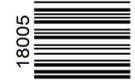
SOUTH AFRICA

**INSIDE A
STATEMENT
JO'BURG
HOME**

25
Covetable
Kitchen
Looks

**SOUTH
AFRICA**
MAY 2018
N°123

R41,00 (VAT INCL)
N\$41,00 (NAMIBIA)



THE *Art of* DESIGN
Global Inspiration, African Style



AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

The 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair made its African debut at La Mamounia in Marrakesh this year after successful editions in London and New York. The Grand Salon wing of the former palace hosted 17 international galleries and over 60 artists from across Africa and the diaspora in a first for the continent

TEXT **NANA OCRAN**

For London-based Founding Director Touria El Glaoui, 1-54 Marrakesh was a coming home of sorts, as well as an opportunity to further develop the African buyer's market within the continent. What started off as an ambitious idea to connect all corners of Africa through contemporary art has become a robust 'tri-continental network' of fairs that El Glaoui's seen grow into a 'co-authored body' – far exceeding her expectations.

Over the years, 1-54 has been shown a constant level of goodwill and for this latest launch, the response from the art world has been no different. A collective understanding within the sector seems to be that 'in time', 1-54 Marrakesh will be one of the growing African-located art platforms which provide an opportunity for gallerists in Europe and elsewhere to build relationships with collectors based on the continent. This was a sentiment voiced by Maria Varnava, Director of London's Tiwani Contemporary, who brought the works of five artists to Marrakesh, providing them with crucial visibility in a space where conversations about African and diasporic African arts practices can flourish. Tiwani was showcasing work from mixed-media Beninese artist **Thierry Oussou**, **Dawit L Petros** – one half of the research-focused Black Athena Collective, **Virginia Chihota** (whose drawings and mono prints illustrate her personal experience of marriage and motherhood) and **Walid Layadi-Marfouk**, who regularly features himself or family members in filmic poses within their Moroccan ancestral home.

Additional highlights included **Malian Abdoulaye Konaté's** huge and striking textile installation, *Noir-Bleu Aux Triangles et Cercles Rouges* at the Blain Southern Gallery's stand. A vibrant work of layered cloth, it was often the go-to photography backdrop for many of the fair's visitors. Stunning architectural work by **Ghizlane Sahli** gained a lot of attention. Her large, tactile and three-dimensional floral wall pieces of embroidered silk typify her background in structural design, as well as her interest in environmental issues. Hers is a world where trash bags, jerry-cans and plastic bottles become expressions of beauty in her onward interrogation of the planet's future.

Also showing were photographer **Sory Sanlé's** wonderfully playful images from his *Volta Studios* series. His vintage shots document a post-independent Burkina Faso, where specific style and fashion statements were paramount.

Sculptor, painter and filmmaker **Zak Ové** has been a significant 1-54 presence – most notably with his huge installation, *Black and Blue: The Invisible Men and the Masque of Darkness*, which made a powerful statement at the 2016 London fair. His smaller showing at Marrakesh featured a psychedelic, crocheted wall hanging – part of a larger kaleidoscopic collection – which was placed near a monochrome work by **Ibrahim El Salahi**, the visionary Sudanese artist whose pioneering and modernist art forms part of a canon of work from a 50-year international career.



A very familiar 1-54 presence was the London and Marrakesh-based photographer and filmmaker **Hassan Hajjaj**. One of Morocco's most prolific contemporary artists, his work has included photo shoots with Will Smith and, more recently, a dazzling cover page of Cardi B for *New York* magazine. This time around, his medina-located boutique gallery showcased images from *Casablanca Not the Movie* by fellow photographer and rising visual star **Yassine Alaoui Ismaili (Yoriyas)**. As evidenced in this love letter to Morocco's largest metropolis, the street-dancer-turned-street-photographer has been visually capturing moments from his home town as part of a longer-term project.

The international and cross-border networking opportunities were high throughout the three days of 1-54 Marrakesh. Zoe Whitley, co-curator of Tate Modern London's *Soul of a Nation*, was in town, as was Brooklyn-based artist Zina Saro-Wiwa, founder of the Boys' Quarters Project Space in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. International curator Christine Eyene was present, as was writer and filmmaker **Nana Oforiatta Ayim** of ANO, the Accra-based cultural research platform, who spoke on the *Decolonising Knowledge* panel, which was part of a forum of conversations curated by writer **Omar Berrada**. Inspirational young art curator **Kimberley Drew (Museum Mammy)** and **Oroma Elewa** – Marrakesh and New York resident, visual artist and author of the performance primer *Crushed Guava Leaves* – were also notable presences.

The atmosphere throughout the fair was heightened by the fact that the newly-opened Musée Yves Saint Laurent Marrakech, with its beautiful Jardin Majorelle, collaborated with a showing of *The Sculptural Dresses* by Moroccan couturier **Noureddine Amir**. Gowns constructed from organic wool, raffia and burlap – all native to Morocco – were displayed as hanging installations in a temporary exhibition space. Also opening was the six-month-long *Africa is No Island* art and photography exhibition at the Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL). A philanthropic initiative of collector **Alami Lazraq** and his son Othman, MACAAL is part of a dynamically growing art scene in Marrakesh, of which 1-54 is now very much a part.

this page Francois Xavier Gbré, *Eko Atlantic Lagos 1*, 2014; Walid Layadi-Marfouk, *Shems (Morning Glory)*, 2017; Hassan Hajjaj, *Marmouche*, 2012, courtesy of the artist **opposite** Thierry Oussou, *La Grenouille*, 2018; Namsa Leuba, *Mamiwata Weke Benin*, 2017; Zak Ové, *DP27*, 2016, mixed media, crochet eddoilies, 180 x 120cm, courtesy of Vigo Gallery

ARTISTS TO WATCH

Yoriyas

Yoriyas Yassine Alaoui Ismaili – known simply as Yoriyas – uses his experience as a former street dancer to document the incidental moments of Casablanca life. His touring exhibition is titled *Casablanca Not the Movie*.

yoriyas.com

Jacqueline Ngo Mpii

The driving force behind Little Africa Paris, a creative brand promoting African artistic thinking, Ngo Mpii has in three short years transformed her lifestyle movement into a creative company. For 1-54 Marrakesh, Little Africa Paris programmed *Marrakesh off the Tracks!*, a showcase of 14 artists from six African countries in a residency that sought to produce collaborative cultural eco-systems.

littleafrica.fr

Houston Maludi

Congolese artist Maludi uses a signature tonal palette of red and white or black, reminiscent of Sudanese artist Ibrahim El Salahi's work. Coining his own style – monochromatic symbolism – his formalistic prints morph into huge, decorative pieces of soft geometry. magnin-a.com