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ANGALIA IS OPENING ITS OWN GALLERY IN THE MARAIS IN FEBRUARY 2023

Following 11 years online, Angalia art gallery is setting up on rue des Coutures Saint Gervais in the Marais neighbourhood in Paris. The new gallery will open on 4 February 2023, with an inaugural exhibition focusing on the DRC's history as depicted by contemporary Congolese art. Angalia is a gallery specialising in contemporary art from DR Congo (DRC), and was founded in 2011 by Pierre Daubert and Karin Barlet.

A bricks and mortar space after 11 years of selling art online

Angalia did not restrict itself to selling online during the 11-year period when the gallery was without walls. In Europe, the gallery took part in art fairs, mainly AKAA, where it showed works right from the outset, and in DR Congo it regularly co-curates solo exhibitions with the Texaf-Bilembo private cultural centre in Kinshasa. It was in this setting that artists such as JP Mika, Amani Bodo, and Gosette Lubondo had their first solo shows.

It became vital to tailor the gallery's approach in Europe at this stage in its development. Despite the strong growth of the online art market, physically seeing artworks and meeting gallerists remains vital, all the more so in an emerging market such as the contemporary African art market.

A showcase for Congolese art in the centre of Paris

Angalia wants to be a showcase for contemporary DRC art in all of its vibrancy and diversity. Congolese art is known primarily for "popular art," embodied by artists such as Moke, Chéri Samba, and others, but in fact is highly diverse. The 13 artists shown to date by the gallery are painters (five), visual artists using mixed techniques (four), an artist who uses pens and pencils, a sculptor, a photographer, and a cartoonist.



The gallery's founders at AKAA 2022, Paris

The gallery acknowledges a certain leaning towards artists who express their views of their society, or convey their vision of the world. For the same reason, Angalia prioritises working with artists who live and work in DR Congo. The intention is to show a Congolese point of view formed in the cultural melting pot of DR Congo. Angalia seeks to be a purveyor: giving a voice to the artists and interesting the European audience in this voice because of what it teaches us about others' perspectives.

That said, the gallery is open to all Congolese artists, and more generally, it will serve as a space for hosting and interacting. From time to time, the new gallery may show the work of non-Congolese African artists, as part of partnerships with stakeholders who are not represented in Paris.

The Angalia-Ébalé partnership – a pilot project to identify promising young artists

The gallery is trialling an innovative mechanism to fund the early careers of young Congolese artists. This revolves around the [Ébalé](#) investment fund created in 2019. The fund has 10 investors, who are private individuals and entities interested in one or the other of the diverse facets of the project: supporting contemporary African art, working with Africa, or impact investing. The Ébalé Fund will also finance the young artists' first solo exhibitions in Paris.

Why DR Congo?

DR Congo was a positive and pragmatic choice. The founders originally worked in socioeconomic development in emerging countries. The initial project was based on promoting African artists, but the intention was not for the gallery to focus on a specific country.

However, for any art gallery, the quality of the relationship between the artist and gallery is crucial. This is even more the case when working on two continents and cross-culturally. First and foremost, to work effectively the two parties need to know each other well, and for that nothing beats seeing each other regularly, preferably in the artist's own environment. The solution to this issue was to choose a concentrated geographical area in order to contain costs and get to know our artists.

From this perspective, few African cities offer as many advantages as Kinshasa: a densely populated city (Africa's third biggest), home to many artists, a place of constructive rivalry between artists, and a city from which new talents regularly emerge.

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