

GALERIE ANGALIA

PRESS RELEASE



**FREDDY
TSIMBA**

**AU-
DELÀ
DE LA
MATIÈRE**

10.10 - 30.11.24

OPENING
10 October 2024
In the presence of the artist

Solo show
Au-delà de la matière – Freddy Tsimba
11 October - 30 November 2024

AU-DELÀ DE LA MATIÈRE - FREDDY TSIMBA

Solo show

11 October – 30 November 2024

Angalia art gallery is hosting a solo exhibition by Freddy Tsimba in October. The Congolese sculptor is best known for working with used cartridge cases, and for the past 30 years has been creating work that bears witness and is a call for hope and peace.

This symbolism is the reason why the *Théâtre national de Chaillot* took the decision in 2018 to install his large-scale work, *Porteuse de vies*, at the bottom of its magnificent staircase, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Freddy Tsimba was the first artist since 1937 to add a permanent artwork to the décor of this historic theatre. *Porteuse de vies* is a 4m high sculpture depicting a woman, solely made from cartridge cases gathered from conflict zones. She is holding an open book made of keys. "She shows us how human beings can now triumph and loudly proclaims that life is priceless."

At the start of the year, France paid homage to Freddy Tsimba once again by making him a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* (Knight of the Order of Arts and Literature). The award was great recognition for an artist who commands respect because of his coherent approach and the humanist values that he espouses.

Just like *Porteuse de vies*, his most symbolic works are busts of women made from cartridge cases that the artist collects and painstakingly welds together. This is Freddy's way of paying tribute to the victims of war, starting with those affected by the relentless conflicts in Eastern DRC. Women have a central role in his work because they bear life and embody hope. He endeavours to "pay tribute to all women for their beauty, resilience in at-times difficult day-to-day life, and

their mental toughness, in a society in which they are still seeking to cement their position."

At the start of his career, Freddy was very impacted by a scene he saw on TV: at a time when war and famine were hitting Somalia, a woman ran towards sacks of food being thrown from a plane. She was probably running in vain, as she could not move as quickly as the others because she was carrying a child on her back. Tsimba was struck by this desperate and primal struggle to survive, and made hunger one of the themes of his work. He collects spoons, forks, and machetes (used for farming) to create female and male bodies.

He works with plenty of other collected metal items, some of which symbolize death, others oppression, and even addiction. In fact, the symbolism of his works is very frequently two-fold, as the message behind the works is never hopeless. For instance, keys express imprisonment but also the idea of opening the door to freedom.

His last solo exhibition in Europe (*Mabele el-eki lola – The earth, brighter than paradise*) took place in 2020 at the Africa Museum, formerly the Royal Museum for Central Africa, in Tervuren, Brussels. It was the first temporary exhibition since the museum reopened in 2018. The museum had been closed for five years for renovation, and the aim was to break with the colonial history of an institution built to glorify King Leopold II. Freddy Tsimba's works were powerfully displayed, and denounced violence and domination – a way of evoking the abuses associated with colonialism – to more effectively inspire "a call for peace and for life".

Au-delà de la matière at Angalia is a significantly smaller exhibition, and seeks to showcase the diversity of the artist's output over the past 15 years. The flagship work is a life-size Christ on the Cross, made from bullet casings. Both striking and unsettling, the

work reinterprets the traditional and universal depiction of sacrifice to evoke the suffering endured by victims of armed conflict around the world. Freddy enables us to experience the crucifixion in all of its contemporary horror by using cartridge cases. His *Immaculé* denounces the hellish cycle of violence, but is also a call for resilience and the possibility of peace. Here, the figure of Christ is less that of a spiritual saviour and more that of all the anonymous martyrs who have lost their lives in present-day conflicts.

In this regard, this Christ on the cross conveys the very essence of his work and its presence resonates with all the other sculptures on show. Two works directly echo it. They are busts of pregnant women, one made from cartridge cases and the other from chains, and which are part of the major *Silhouettes effacées* series. Another important Tsimba series is *Les rescapés*, heads made from melted-down cartridge cases, paying tribute to people with facial injuries.

Tsimba makes use of items that symbolise death, and likes to emphasize not just life but also grace. This quest is powerfully embodied by *Mama machettes*. Her curves and lightness are surprising, given that she is entirely made from welded-together machetes. Machetes were first and foremost one of a small farmer's basic tools, before being linked with the Rwandan genocide in the collective imagination. *Mama machettes*, a nurturing mother, embodies the domination of life over death.

The exhibition also contains two works from another of Tsimba's symbolic series: *Centre fermé, rêve ouvert*. The series is all about humiliation and was inspired by his own experience in a detention centre in Belgium, where he was held for several days because of an administrative mistake. It also echoes the violence perpetrated by armed militia against women, particularly in Eastern DRC.

Nevertheless, Tsimba said that "earth is brighter than paradise" at the time of his exhibition at the Africa Museum in Belgium. And to celebrate life, he also depicts childhood, in which play and hope predominate, with his *Children paradise* installation formed by two sculptures solely made from keys.

Click [here](#) to read the artist's CV.

Photos of the works



1. Freddy Tsimba, *Centre fermé, rêve ouvert n°47* (2019)
Welded spoons
201 x 84 x 50 cm
© Courtesy Freddy Tsimba



2. Freddy Tsimba, *Mama machettes* (2011)
Welded machetes
195 x 117 x 124 cm
© Courtesy Freddy Tsimba



4. Freddy Tsimba, *Immaculé* (2024)
Welded cartridge cases
Dimensions to be specified
© Courtesy Freddy Tsimba



3. Freddy Tsimba, *Les rescapés n°00017* (2019)
Patinated brass (melted cartridge cases)
29 x 22 x 20 cm
© Courtesy Freddy Tsimba

Visuals of the works in the exhibition are available on request from:
barlet@galerie-angalia.com.

Galerie Angalia
10-12 rue des Coutures Saint Gervais
75003 Paris
Open Tuesday to Saturday
Tuesday. 12 – 7 p.m.
Wed. to Sat. 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
07 81 72 30 62
galerie-angalia.com

Contact information:
Pierre Daubert (director)
daubert@galerie-angalia.com
06 32 10 55 80
Karin Barlet
barlet@galerie-angalia.com
06 13 92 18 72