



OPENING
5 July 2025

Solo show
Kura Shomali - "On entre OK, on sort KO"
8 July - 27 September 2025
(closed from 5 to 30 August)

KURA SHOMALI -
« On entre OK, on sort KO »
 Solo show

08.07 to 02.08 then 02.09 to 27.09.2025

Opening on 5 July from 5pm to 8pm

Kura Shomali was born in Kananga on 25 May 1979. His family moved to Kinshasa a few years later. The young Kura had a flair for learning. He studied humanities and then landed a bursary enabling him to go to Kinshasa University to study biochemistry. He then followed his father's advice and started to study medicine (1999). However, Kura did not see himself as Doctor Shomali and instead dreamed of being an artist. He had always loved drawing, and at every age showed signs of his attraction to art. Art finally won the day. In 2001, Kura quit medical school and enrolled at ABA (School of Fine Arts) in Kinshasa, graduating in 2003.

The following year he was selected by the French Embassy to study at Strasbourg School of Art and Design. Kura tried his hand at everything during the four-year course: video, silkscreen printing, painting on canvas, wood, metal, puppetry, etc. However, on his return to Kinshasa in 2008, with his degree in the bag, he returned to his first love: working on drawing paper.

A polyphonic artistic blend¹

To understand Kura Shomali's work, we must imagine a creative approach that is solely driven by inspiration. There is no point looking for a central theme. The only guiding principle is that there are no principles, as it were. He seizes on anything that comes to mind, without seeking to put things into some kind of order. Kura has the ability or luck to be able to capitalize on each visual, artistic or social

experience, and use it to nourish his creative ability. And as he draws inspiration from anything and everything, it is natural that his work is made up of "a bit of everything".

Where does his unbridled inspiration come from? The artist explains in his own words in a Virginie Dupray article published in 2007 in an *Editions de l'œil* paperback devoted to him: "I go along, I take, I pick up, haphazardly, by the shovel load, everything interests me." "I strike while the iron is hot, and here it is always hot. I glean things from newspapers, local and international stories, I nab, I add, it always works, the climate is always conducive, everything always grows, despite it all." "I channel hop. I sketch, I draw, I cut, I style, a daily log of this massive outdoor performance, with 10 million extras, who are not even paid for their troubles."

Kura's works tend to be humorous. Depending on the work, the humour is found in the subject, treatment, facial expressions, or depiction. Let's take a work from 2018, "Miss Panda", as an example. Totally naïve, the girl depicted is so head-over-heels in love with her darling little pandas that she is literally suffocating them with her love. The poor pandas are sticking out their tongues and are suffocating, and maybe they are also dazed by the charms of their mistress. It is amusing, we can surmise that the artist enjoyed going about his work, and that is very refreshing. Kura Shomali believes in the power of spontaneity. He lets inspiration guide his work. Indeed, this is what is consistent in his artistic approach, and it is just as valid as any other.

Mockery also plays a big role in his works, and this is hardly surprising for a Kinshasa artist. However, a certain amount of affection for his subjects also shines through, making his works more original. Although *Miss Panda* is a real pain and apparently silly; she is, nevertheless, moving. Kura is second to none when it comes to capturing and reproducing the ludicrousness of our lives. Hence these

¹ In the words of the Congolese art critic Jean Kamba.

snapshots of life in DR Congo, which do not look like much, and could be considered as anecdotal, but, when all is said and done, cover whole lifetimes.

[Tout Puissant OK Jazz](#), the iconic Congolese rumba orchestra.

When Kura revisits the work of the masters...

Kura also draws inspiration from other artists. Specifically, the leading African photographers of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Jean Depara (Zaire) and the Malians Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé. For instance, they are the inspiration for works such as *Basi na Biso* (2017), based on a Depara shot, and the stunning *Papa Mombasa*, inspired by a Santu Mokofeng photograph.

Kura has also drawn on Matisse's colourful paintings to inspire his vibrant palette of colours and splashes of ink. The exhibition showcases three successfully "*Shomalised*" Matisse masterpieces: *Spanish woman with a tambourine*, *Woman with a hat*, and *Madame Matisse*.

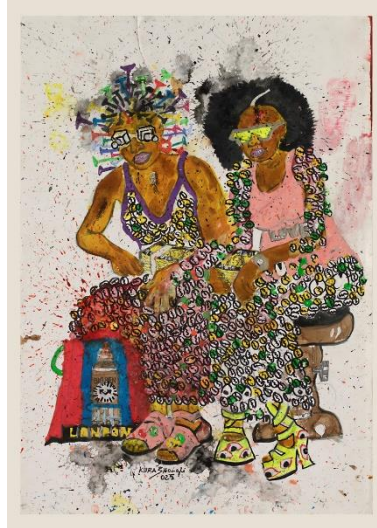
A technique based on ink on paper

Kura Shomali uses ink, poster paint, felt tips and even charcoal. He sometimes makes use of collage. While his works are all recognizable, it is firstly because of his lines, but also the splashes of ink that are very frequently found on them. The link between these stunning splashes of ink and the teeming disorder of Kinshasa is not coincidental. Besides, Kura does not just reflect the buzz and disorder of Kinshasa in his works, but also on the medium. His drawing paper is never clean and tidy. And those who have been to his studio know that no special effort is needed for him to stamp the Kinshasa experience on his paper. Chaos is a way of life.

Ultimately and more than any other, Kura's art embodies the famous disorder of Kinshasa. With his work, "*on entre OK, on sort KO*" (you go in OK; you leave KO'd), with this being the title of one of the artworks on show, itself borrowed from the famous title of a song by



1. Kura Shomali, *Bandale* (2024)
Mixed media on paper
60 x 50 cm
Photo credit : PCP Photographie -
© K. Shomali



2. Kura Shomali, *Ba mama moziki*
(2024)
Mixed media on paper
60 x 50 cm
Photo credit : PCP Photographie -
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Visuals of the works in the exhibition
are available on request from :
barlet@galerie-angalia.com.



4. Kura Shomali, *On entre OK, on sort
KO* (2025)
Mixed media on paper
50 x 60 cm
Photo credit : PCP Photographie -
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3. Kura Shomali, *Ma Amélie* (2024)
Mixed media on paper
60 x 60 cm
Photo credit : PCP Photographie -
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