



GALERIE ANGALIA

TRIBUTE TO CHÉRI CHÉRIN

WITH JP MIKA'S
PARTICIPATION

17.03 - 02.05.26

Opening reception
14 March 2026

Exhibition
Tribute to Chéri Chérin – *With JP Mika's participation*
17 March to 2 May 2026

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Opening reception on Saturday 14 March
17:00 – 20:00

Chéri Chérin, one of the figureheads of DR Congo popular painting, died in October 2025. He was completing a series of paintings for this exhibition, which has become a tribute to him. Chéri Chérin, whose real name was Joseph Kinkonda, was 70. Having begun his career in 1974, he racked up no fewer than 51 years of uninterrupted artistic output.

Having experienced the typical start-of-career ups and downs, which led him to take orders for posters and adverts painted on walls in Kinshasa, Chéri Chérin developed his own narrative figure painting style based on themes from Congolese society. The famous SAPE had a special place in his work, especially as he himself was one of the pioneers of the SAPE movement (Society of Fun Lovers and Elegant People, whose members love to wear expensive labels), which has now become a key part of Congolese identity.

Chéri Chérin remained in the shadow of Moke and Chéri Samba for a long time, but his involvement in the *Africa Remix* exhibition in Paris in 2005 enabled him to gain recognition. The key to his success, apart from the liveliness of his compositions and his easy brushstrokes, is having looked outside Congolese society in order to depict international subjects with the same ironic, comical or darkly humorous verve that he used when painting human relationships on the street corner. By extending his depictions to international news, he provided an African interpretation of international affairs, which was all the more

interesting because it was rare at the time in African contemporary art.

In 2015, in an interview for the gallery, he said “our sources of inspiration are urban social life, mythology, religion, and political history too; they are our main sources of inspiration. A painter reflects society.” Regarding his creative process, he explained that a headline or topic would be the starting point, and he would then seek to start a debate with people around him. “Everyone tells me what they think of the topic. These arguments form the raw materials for my painting. [...] I gather together all of these arguments, I make a sketch, and when it's ready, I start painting.”

Chéri Chérin has exhibited widely in Europe. He had a particularly fond memory of the *Kin Moto na Bruxelles* exhibition in the Belgian capital in 2003 and the *100% Afrique* exhibition at Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum in 2006-2007. Two other trips to Spain in 2008 and 2009, in tandem with JP Mika, also stood out in his memory. His most iconic works were showcased at the *Beauté Congo-Congo Kitoko* exhibition at the Fondation Cartier in Paris in July 2015 – January 2016. In 2024, we celebrated his 50th career anniversary at the gallery with the *Génération Chéri* exhibition at which he shared top billing with Chéri Benga and Chéri Samba.

Chéri Chérin liked to welcome young artists to his studio in order to teach them. In 2015, he said that he had supervised around 30 “keen artists”. “When I come across a young person who is good at drawing and who is worth supervising, I get them to come to my studio. The young artist comes for a period of observation. They observe how things work and then I let them get on with their work. The young artist does what they can without my input, but I also make comments and offer criticism. Often, students do not spend much time with me, because when a student stays with a teacher for a long time, they will fall into the trap of copying the teacher. [...] Once the student grasps the

popular art ethos, when they have it in mind, they can no longer stay with their teacher, they need to fly with their own wings.”

The most well-known young artist to have passed through Chérin’s studio is JP Mika, who joined in late 2005. One of the paintings in this exhibition (*Ultra-transmission*, 2020) immortalises their collaboration. The two artists have since maintained a very close relationship. JP Mika is both an active witness, proof and the jewel in the crown of Chérin’s desire to teach the next generation.

The exhibition contains five JP Mika artworks, including four from his first period, produced from 2008 to 2012. They reflect his teacher’s major influence because of their themes, style and composition. A fifth work (*Prospérité*, 2014) marks his emancipation phase, with the advent of floral fabric as the artistic medium.

The significance of both his career path and his successful training need to be highlighted, as Chérin’s ambition was not to train clones of himself, but to instil the fundamentals in young artists enabling them to build their own careers. Indeed, the process was so successful that the student has surpassed the teacher, without Chérin ever taking umbrage, indeed, quite the opposite: he was proud of JP Mika’s success.

View the [Chéri Chérin's online page](#) and [CV](#).



1. Chéri Chérin, *Ultra-transmission* (2020)
Acrylic on canvas
200 x 130 cm
© C. Chérin
Photo credit: PCP Photographie



4. JP Mika, *Concours de beauté au village* (2009)
Oil and acrylic on canvas
100 x 81 cm
© JP Mika
Photo credit: PCP Photographie



2. Chéri Chérin, *L'immortel* (2019)
Acrylic on canvas
127 x 196 cm
© C. Chérin
Photo credit: PCP Photographie



3. Chéri Chérin, *Kinshasa ya lelo* (2023)
Acrylic on canvas
120 x 180 cm
© C. Chérin
Photo credit: PCP Photographie



5. JP Mika, *Le printemps arabe* (2011)
Oil and mastic on canvas
135 x 198 cm
© JP Mika
Photo credit: PCP Photographie

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

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Tue. 12h - 19h
Wed. to Sat. 11am - 7pm
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