

Press Release / 新闻稿

CONGOEYES EXHIBITION

AZA MANSONGI & JONATHAN VATUNGA



OPENING 2ND OF MARCH 2019

EXHIBITION FROM 3RD OF MARCH TILL 31ST OF MARCH 2019

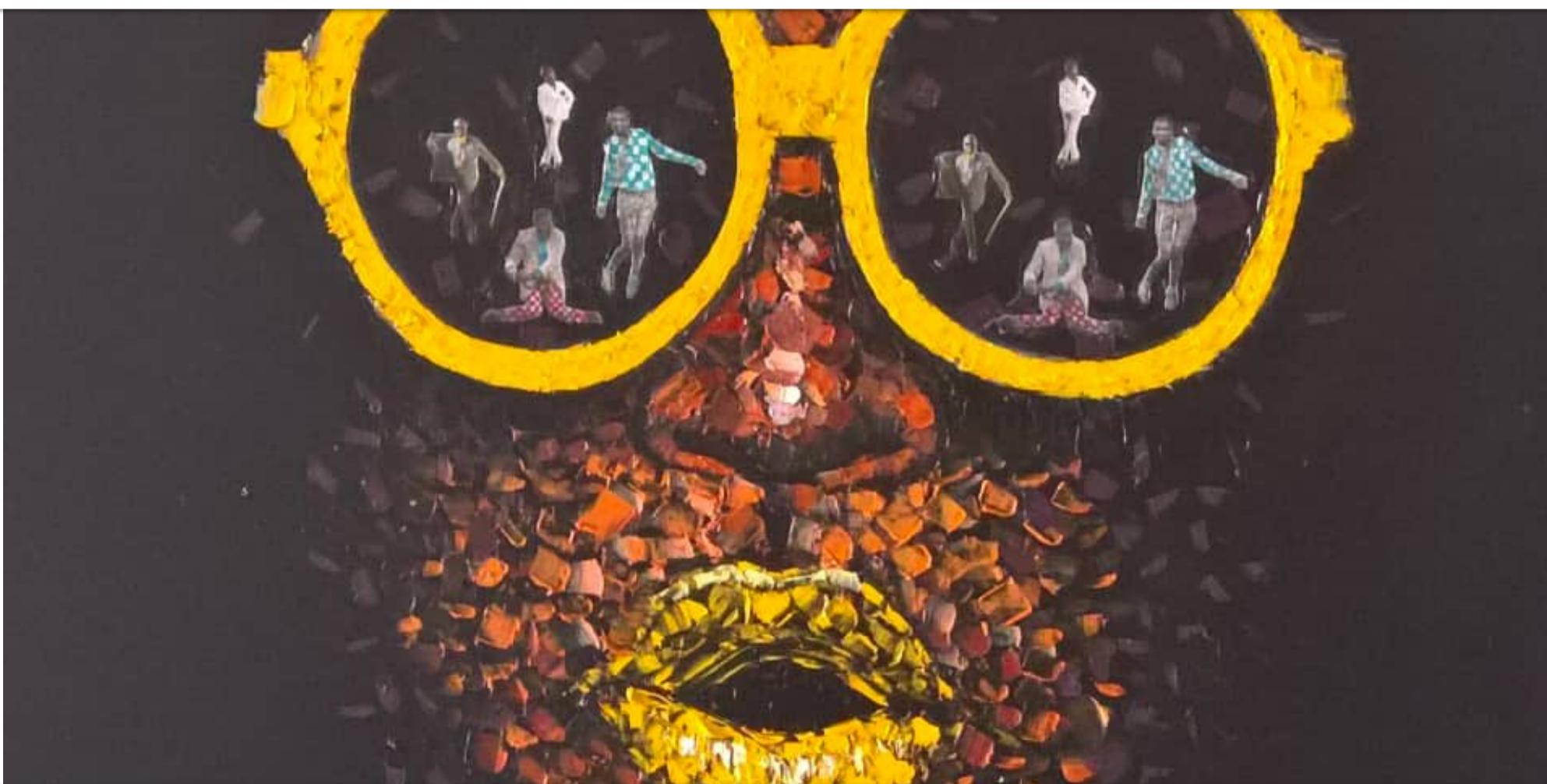
AFRICART GALLERY HONG KONG

**10 HOI PONG STREET, G/F, SAI KUNG, N.T.
HONG KONG**

CONGOEYES



AZAMANSONGI



JONATHAN VATUNGA

CONGOEYES

« ORO, THE ESSENCE OF COMMUNICATION, TAKES PLACE IN THE EYES. »
– OLD YORUBA ADAGE

The eyes are able to express what words cannot. We do not only use them to see, but also to connect with other people. Often, they dominate our emotional communication and convey multiple feelings. Their power of connecting and their ability to translate complex emotions is at the heart of our new exhibition **Congo Eyes**, featuring Aza Mansongi's and Jonathan Vatunga's artistic research. By depicting the human figure with a particular attention given to the eyes, they allow the viewer to deal with their subjects on a more personal level. Through this communication process, the artists engage in an experience with each spectator establishing an intercultural dialogue. However, if these two young Congolese artists both desire interaction with their audiences, they are seeing the world in different ways and in their own very distinctive manners.

With her art, influenced by the Popular painting movement, Aza Mansongi (°1980) explores the dynamics of human relations. « No one can evolve alone, everyone needs someone else » she often says. Following this thought, she represents human figures in groups or couples, and focuses on the complex relationships between them. Long and expressive faces, reminding African tribal masks, are the most important part of her compositions. All the characters actions can be understood through their exaggerated facial expressions.

Furthermore, Aza highlights the « contagious » nature of some feelings by overlapping faces and bodies, and creating new hybrid beings bounded in a common emotion. If the link emerging between the characters is the central one, the one made with the viewers isn't less essential. Through a complex play of gazes, Aza reveals to us parts of open-ended stories. In this way, she gives to the spectator the possibility to give his/her own meaning to the scene. Sometimes, the connection with the viewer is also made by the direct gaze hidden in the painting, such as in *Radar* and *Boomerang* (both works being part of the exhibition). Those piercing eyes attract our attention and create a mysterious and dreamy atmosphere reinforced by the many symbols present in the paintings. Animals such as fishes and birds or artificial lights are small symbolic elements which give a supplementary layer to the scenes. Their presence, added to the ubiquitous tribal masks, enables Aza to underline another alliance: the strong connection between past and present, tradition and innovation.

CONGOEYES

Expressing each relation more as a constantly changing flux rather than a static moment, Aza's works can be seen as a true celebration of life itself.

As for Aza Mansongi, Jonathan Vatunga (°1996) often emphasizes the importance of social interactions in his art. Witnessing the impact of globalization on cultural and personal identities, he wishes to encourage people to share their experiences, but without loosing their own personality. To address this problem, the artist plays with the visual language, mixing abstraction and realism, to create human figures being both unique and plural at the same time. The multilayer aspect of Jonathan's paintings, obtained by an addition of paint, glue and engravings, reinforces the duality between collective and individual aspects of our existence.

In his compositions, the eyes —always represented in a realistic way — are the place where the personal feelings connect with social expectations. The resulting pressure from this interaction may contribute to the dissolution of our identity — a situation represented by means of blurring faces.

In Jonathan Vatunga works, *Fashion or Manners* and *Facing Reality*, the conflict between individual emotions and public requirement is particularly striking. To highlight this complex situation, Jonathan uses not only a transition in styles, from realism to abstraction, but also make use of an element of the composition. Indeed, the reflections in the sunglasses are mirrors not only of the outside world but also of the inner thoughts of the character. By overlapping these two realities, the artist creates a dialogue between them and therefore enables their reconciliation.

AZA MANSONGI

BORN IN 1980 (KINSHASA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO).
LIVES AND WORKS IN DOUALA (CAMEROON).



© Aza Mansongi

Selected Solo & Group Exhibitions

Afro Pop, Johannesburg (South Africa), Melrose Gallery, 5th - 28th October 2018.

Timeless. A group exhibition by established and emerging artists from the continent of Africa, Johannesburg (South Africa), Melrose Gallery / Supercar and Art Festival, April 2018.

Regards d'Afrique. Magie Africaine d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui. [Views form Africa. African Magic of Yesterday and Today.], Lyon (France), Galerie des Tuiliers, November 2017 - January 2018.

Aza Mansongi, Paris (France), Arts Design Africa Gallery, April 2017. (Solo show)

Regard d'Aza Mansongi [Aza Mansongi's view], Douala (Cameroon), Bolo Artistic & Cultural Space, 26th October 2016 - January 2017. (Solo show)

Festival IAM ART & FASHION CAMEROON, Douala (Cameroon), MAM Gallery, October 2015.

International Contemporary Art Fair ART3F, Paris (France), September 2015.

3kokorico, Biarritz (France), Hausseguy Gallery, Biarritz, July 2015.

3kokorico, Ardon, Switzerland, Valette Foundation, 2014.

JONATHAN VATUNGA

BORN IN 1996 (KINSHASA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO).
LIVES AND WORKS IN KINSHASA.



© Jonathan Vatunga

Selected Solo & Group Exhibitions

- 13th Dak'Art Biennale of African Contemporary Art, Dakar (Senegal), May - June 2018.
Le monde des Flamboyants : Regards, Kinshasa (DRC), Trust Merchant Bank, 2018.
Exhibition at Canadian Embassy in Kinshasa (DRC), 2017.
La Traversée [The Crossing], Kinshasa (DRC), Academy of Fine Arts, 2017.
Art & Environnement, Kinshasa (DRC), Trust Merchant Bank, 2016.
Dimension Plurielle [Plural Dimension], Kinshasa (DRC), Centre Wallonie Bruxelles, 2016.
Emergence 2, Kinshasa (DRC), Academy of Fine Arts / Pullman Grand Hotel, 2015.
Passion de l'Art [Passion of Art], Kinshasa (DRC), Pullman Grand Hotel, 2015.
Emergence, Kinshasa (DRC), Pullman Grand Hotel, 2014.

AFRICART GALLERY HONG KONG

Stimulated by the growing interest in African art on the international scene,

AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong opened its doors in 2018.

The focus of the gallery is to exhibit, promote and represent young and

established African artists on the Asian art scene. Our activities

concentrate especially on Hong Kong area, where we are the first and only art

space dedicated to the Contemporary African paintings, sculptures and

other mediums.

We wish to establish new intercultural dialogues stressing the multiplicity and the richness of the visual African arts. To achieve this goal we are proposing a vibrant exhibitions program, extended by many flourishing collaborations with partners all around the city.



<https://www.africart.com.hk>

Contact us for more information:

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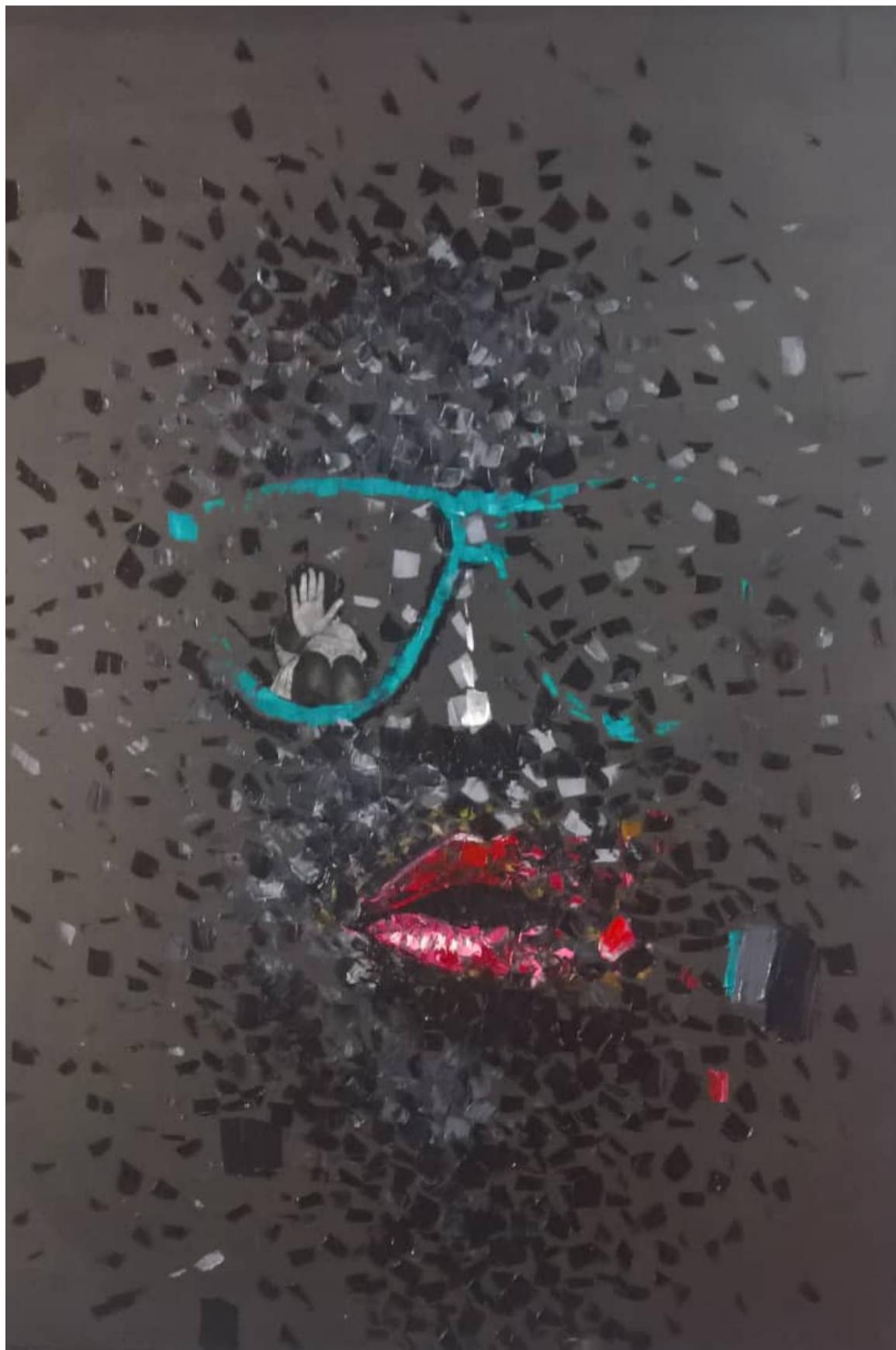
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SELECTED
ART WORKS

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Jonathan Vatunga (°1996), *Mode ou mœurs [Fashion or manners]*. 2018, Mixed media,
39,4 x 39,4 in ; 100 x 100 cm. © Jonathan Vatunga & AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong.

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Jonathan Vatunga (°1996), *Face à la Réalité [Facing Reality]*. 2018, Mixed media, 39,4 x 29,5 in ; 100 x 75 cm. © Jonathan Vatunga & AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong.

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Jonathan Vatunga (°1996), *Regard [The Look]*. 2018, Oil and acrylic on canvas, 39,4 x 39,4 in ; 100 x 100 cm. © Jonathan Vatunga & AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong.

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Aza Mansongi (°1980), *Carrefour [A Crossroad]*, 2012. Acrylic on canvas, 31,5 x 31,5 inch ; 80 x 80 cm. © Aza Mansongi & AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong.

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Aza Mansongi (°1980), *Abnégation [Self-sacrifice]*, 2016. Acrylic on coton canvas, 31,5 x 31,5 inch ; 80 x 80 cm. © Aza Mansongi & AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong.

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Aza Mansongi (°1980), *Boomerang*, 2016. Acrylic on coton canvas, 31,5 x 31,5 inch ; 80 x 80 cm. © Aza Mansongi & AfricArt Gallery Hong Kong.