



Portrait de Frédéric Bruly Bouabré

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré

Biography

Frédéric Bruly Bouabré

Born c. 1923, Zéprégüé, Ivory Coast

Died in 2014, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, where he worked and lived

The origin Frédéric Bruly Bouabré's work stems from a revelatory experience: on March 11, 1948, when "the heavens opened before my eyes and seven colorful suns described a circle of beauty around their Mother-Sun, I became Cheik Nadro: 'The one who does not forget.'"

Since then, Bouabré compiled his research in manuscripts that deals with art, traditions, poetry, tales, religion, esthetics, and philosophy - revealing himself to be an astonishing thinker, poet, encyclopedist, creator. Searching for a way to preserve and transmit the knowledge of the Bété people and of the world, he invented a unique alphabet of 448 monosyllabic pictograms, an inventory of sounds that would allow to transcribe all the languages in the world.

This endeavor earned Bouabré the legendary reputation of being another Champollion and translates the universal thought of Frederic Bruly Bouabré who since his vision, seeks to unite and pacify mankind. In the 1970s, he started to transfer his thoughts to hundreds of small drawings in postcard format, using a ballpoint pen and colour pencils. These drawings, gathered under the title of *Connaissance du Monde* (World Knowledge), form an encyclopedia of universal knowledge and experience. For Bouabré, his drawings are a representation of everything that is revealed or concealed – signs, divine thoughts, dreams, myths, the sciences, traditions – and he views his role as an artist as a redemptive calling.

EXHIBITIONS (SELECTION)

2020

Scrivere disegnando, quand la langue cherche son autre, Centre d'art contemporain Genève, in collaboration with La Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland (curators: Andrea Bellini et Sarah Lombardi)

2018-2019

Cahiers écrits, dessinés, imprimés, Fondation Bodmer, Geneva, Switzerland (curators: Thierry Davila, Jacques Berchtold)

Talisman in the age of difference, Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK (curator: Yinka Shonibare)

2018

La Tempête, Centre régional d'art contemporain de Sète, France (curator: Hugues Reip)

African Passions, Palais Cadaval, Evora, Portugal (curator: André Magnin)

Côte d'Ivoire: Identité et vitalité de l'art contemporain, Mattatoio, Roma, Italy (curator: Massimo Scaringella)

2017

Art/Afrique : le nouvel atelier _ Les Initiés : sélection d'œuvres (1989-2009) de la collection d'art contemporain africain Pigozzi, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France (curators: Suzanne Pagé, Angéline Scherf, Ludovic Delalande & scientific exhibition council: André Magnin)

E-Mois, MACAAL, Marrakech, Morocco (curators: Othman Lazraq, Meriem Berrada)

AFRICA. Raccontare un mondo, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milano, Italy (curator: Adelina von Fürstenberg)

2016

Vivre !! La collection agnès b. au musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris, France (curator: Sam Stourdzé)

Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism, Musée d'art, Tel Aviv, Israël (curator: Ruth Direktor)

Xu Bing Worlds of Words / Goods of Gods, Triennale de Milano, Italy (curator: Hans de Wolf)

2015

Rituels, répétitions, contraintes, tentations - Plateforme Roven, Musée régional d'art contemporain du Languedoc-Roussillon, Sérignan, France (curators: Johana Carrier, Joana Neves, Marine Pagès et Diogo Pimentão)

Un regard sur la collection Agnès B., le LaM de Villeneuve d'Ascq, France (curator: Marc Donnadiou)

The Untold Want, Royal Hibernian Academy Gallery, Dublin, Ireland (curators: Patrick T. Murphy, Caroline Hancock)

2014

Hommage à Frédéric Bruly Bouabré et Okhai Ojeikere, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

Une histoire, Art, Architecture et design des années 1980 à nos jours, nouvel accrochage, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France

Ici l'Afrique / Here Africa, Château de Penthes, Geneva, Switzerland (curator: Adelina von Fürstenberg)

2013

Il Palazzo Enciclopedico, Biennale de Venise, edition 55, Ivorian Pavilion, Venice, Italy
Four Corners of the World, Hite Foundation, Seoul, South Korea (curateur: Jonathan Watkins)

2012

The Imminence of Poetics, Sao Paulo Bienal, edition 30, Sao Paulo, Brasil

2011

Le monde vous appartient, Palazzo Grassi, François Pinault Fondation, Venice, Italy
(curator: Caroline Bourgeois)

2010

Frédéric Bruly Bouabre at Tate Modern, Tate Modern, London, UK
African Stories, Ancienne Banque du Maroc, Marrakech, Morocco (curator : André Magnin)

2009

Una nuova storia, Complesso del Vittoriano, Roma, Italy
Against Exclusion, 3ème Biennale d'Art Contemporain, The Garage Center for Contemporary Culture, Moscow, Russia

2007

Why Africa ?, *La collezione Pigozzi*, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin, Italy
(curator: André Magnin)

2006

100% Africa, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain (curator: André Magnin)

2005

African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection (curator: André Magnin)
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA ; National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. USA
Arts of Africa, The Contemporary collection of Jean Pigozzi, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco
(curator: André Magnin)

2004

Africa Remix (curators: Simon Njami, Jean-Hubert Martin, David Elliott, Marie-Laure Bernadac)
Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Germany ; Hayward Gallery, London, UK
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France ; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan ;
Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2000

Voici, 100 ans d'art contemporain, Palais des Beaux-arts, Brussels, Belgium

1999/2000

Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980
Queens Museum of Art, New York, USA ; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA ; Miami Art Museum, Miami, USA

1996

Neue Kunst aus Afrika., Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Germany

São Paulo Biennial (23): Universalis, São Paulo, Brasil
By Night, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France

1995

Galerie des 5 continents: Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris, France
Big City: Artists from Africa, Serpentine Gallery, London, UK

1994

Worlds Envisioned: Alighiero e Boetti and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré. Dia Center for the Arts, New York, USA ; American Center, Paris, France

1993

Azur, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Jouy en Josas, France

1992

Out of Africa: The Jean Pigozzi Contemporary African Art Collection, Saatchi Collection, London, UK (curator: André Magnin)

1991

Africa Hoy (curator: André Magnin)
Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas, Spain ; Groninger Museum, Groningen, Holland ; Centro Cultural de Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City, Mexico

1989

Magiciens de la terre. Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou et Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris, France (curators: Jean-Hubert Martin, André Magnin)
WAAA, A fAr African Art, Courtrai, Belgium

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (SELECTION)

Contemporary African Art Collection - Jean PIGOZZI Collection, Genève, Suisse
Musée National d'Abidjan, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
Fond de dotation, Collection Agnès b, Paris, France
Fondation François Pinault, Palazzo Grassi, Venise, Italie
MNAM, Centre Georges Pompidou en dépôt au Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, Paris, France
Groninger Museum, Groningen, Pays-Bas
Centro de Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico, Mexique
Galerie Tanya RUMPF, Haarlem, Pays-Bas
Tate Modern, Londres, Grande-Bretagne
Musée d'Art Brut, Lausanne, Suisse
Collection Lambert (LAC), Genève, Suisse
Collection Madame et Monsieur David-Weill, Paris, France
Collection Gervane et Matthias Leridon, Paris, France



Un regard sur la collection d'agnès b, LAM ©Nicolas Dewitte



CO-NAISSANCES, Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris, 2018, ©Gregory Copitet

endeavors: to preserve the culture of his people, the Bété, whose homeland in what is now Cote d'Ivoire was colonized and decimated by the French from the 1800s through the middle of the 20th century.



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré (Cheik Nadro) (Côte d'Ivoire, 1923–2014), “*Un divin art se dessine sur orange, ici l’Afrique se révèle en celeste beauté – vive l’Afrique!*” (2006), colored pencil and ink on cardstock (gift of Stefan Simchowicz, 2018.16)

One way Bruly Bouabré preserved Bété culture was by recording Bété heritage and myths in crayon and ink drawings on postcard-sized pieces of paper. The Bété people did not have a writing system for their spoken language, so the artist created one and used it, along with French, to incorporate descriptions of these scenes within the composition. These drawings are the subject of *Alphabété: The World Through the Eyes of Frédéric Bruly Bouabré*, now on view at the Cantor Arts Center on the campus of Stanford University.

Bruly Bouabré’s writing system was a 448-character syllabary; each character represents a syllable, as opposed to a letter or words and phrases. He hoped that Bété could become a universal writing system. In theory, syllabaries can transcribe any sound the human mouth can muster, making them a viable option for any culture.



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré (Cheik Nadro) (Côte d'Ivoire, 1923–2014), “*Je suis l'oreille ministre du 'son informatique' dans l'espace et le temps*” (2005), colored pencil and ink on cardstock (gift of Stefan Simchowicz, 2018.7)



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré (Cheik Nadro) (Côte d'Ivoire, 1923–2014), “*Les liens sacrés du mariage: sur le bord de la Seine en France, un couple ghaneen se marie*” (2010), colored pencil and ink on cardstock (gift of Stefan Simchowicz, 2018.57)

The pieces on view at the Cantor express the deep connection that Bruly Bouabré felt to the world around him, the Bété world. Many of the drawings appear to be parts of series to which he repeatedly returned. Four of the cards depict the artist’s mother, Tagro Dréhounou, dressed in the flags of various nations. Another four comprise a series titled *Man and the art of dressing well*, each individual work featuring a uniquely dressed dapper dude. (One man has facial scars that Bruly Bouabré tenderly renders.) Fruit is another domestic motif that recurs regularly. Bananas, kola nuts, and oranges are portrayed and described as providential gifts.

The immediacy of these themes is offset by works addressing broad political and philosophical issues. For example, the piece, “Afghanistan! If eyelids were long, here is how human virtue or humiliation would tie them!” combines humor and disgust to dissect both the inevitability and futility of conflict. Another work, titled “The desire of man,” features a beautiful woman. Her hair decorated in baubles and her head and neck in precious jewels, she is surrounded by an aura and her expression evokes the Virgin Mary.



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré (Cheik Nadro) (Côte d'Ivoire, 1923–2014), “Je suis le nez: divine porte ouverte sur le souffle de la vie!” (2005), colored pencil and ink on cardstock (gift of Stefan Simchowicz, 2018.9)



Frédéric Bruly Bouabré (Cheik Nadro) (Côte d'Ivoire, 1923–2014), “Vision de la grande humanité aux couleurs de l'arc-en-ciel: ici, têtes rouge, violet, blanche, bleue, noire, jaune, verte” (2009), colored pencil and ink on cardstock (gift of Stefan Simchowicz, 2018.45)

Aphabété celebrates an artist's singular, loving vision. Cote d'Ivoire's history, I would venture, is likely little known to most who happen upon this article, this exhibition, or this artist's work (it was for this author). The story displayed on the gallery walls narrates the artist's dearest concern, his people. As a story of tragedy and hope, it is universal — just as Bruly Bouabré hoped his syllabary might be.