



Calixte Dakpogan, *Chef de quartier*, 2011

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## Calixte Dakpogan

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## BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1958, Pahou, Benin

Lives and works in Porto Novo, Benin

Calixte Dakpogan's Vodun heritage is intrinsic to his work. Born to a family of blacksmiths, he grew up in the Goukoumé district of Porto Novo, Benin, a district dedicated to Ogun, the god of iron. Ogun is the principal divinity worshiped by the Dakpogan family. The tradition of metalworking has been carried from father to son since their ancestor Sabgo Ayato worked as a blacksmith in the royal court of King Toffa.

The abundance of car wreckages in Porto Novo has provided Calixte Dakpogan with an inexhaustible source of materials. He began to use scavenged car parts to create standing figures, following directly in the tradition of Fon statues made from scrap iron in the early nineteenth century. In 1992, he was commissioned to create a series 100 of these works for Ouidah 92: The First International Festival of Vodun Arts and Cultures. Their contribution remains on permanent display. Today, after an interval of one and a half centuries, the relationship between Fon sculptures and the work of Dakpogan transcends purely visual or technical aspects, being intimately related with the creative process.

Since 1990, Calixte has worked independently, using salvaged metallic and plastic elements to create anthropomorphic figures and masks. A gas tank becomes a body or headlights become teeth. Two formless segments become a recognizable personage. His creations, full of talent, humour, and stories, are imbued with a contemporary imagination and an astounding inventiveness

*« All my sculptures speak as much about my country Benin, my culture, my environment and my beliefs as they do about my vision of the world. ».*

**GROUP SHOWS**

2021

Ex-Africa: Présences africaines dans l'art aujourd'hui, Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, Paris, France (curator: Philippe Dagen)

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 advisor: André Magnin)

Gaia à travers ses miroirs, Villa des Arts, Rabat, Morocco (as part of the event L'Afrique en Capitale)

2016

Essentiel Paysage, Al Maaden Art Gallery, Centre d'Art Contemporain Africain, Marrakech, Morocco

2014

MASKS, JGM Galerie, Paris, France

2013–2014

Raw Vision: 25 ans d'Art Brut, Halle Saint-Pierre, Paris, France

2011

Riad Al Maaden, Marrakech, Morocco

Reconfiguring an African Icon: Odes to the Mask by Modern and Contemporary Artists from Three Continents, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

2010

African Stories, Ancienne Banque du Maroc, Magnin-A, Marrakech, Morocco (curator: André Magnin)  
ARTPARIS+GUESTS. André Magnin & Leridon Collection, Grand Palais, Paris, France

2009

Africa ? Una nuova storia, Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome, Italy (curator: André Magnin)

2007–2008

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

2007

Masques rituels et contemporains, Fondation Jean-Paul Blanchère, Apt, France

Terre Noire. Ousmane Sow et les tendances de la sculpture africaine, Musée Maurice Denis, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

2006–2007

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

2005–2006

*African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection* (curator: André Magnin)  
Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, USA  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, USA

2005

*Arts of Africa, The Contemporary Collection of Jean Pigozzi, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco, Principality of Monaco* (curator: André Magnin)

2000

*Fait Maison, Musée International des Arts Modestes, Sète, France*  
*5th Lyon Biennale of Contemporary Art – Partage d'Exotismes, Lyon, France*  
*Rendering Visible: Contemporary Art from the Republic of Benin, October Gallery, London, United Kingdom*

1998–1999

*Forjar el Espacio: La Escultura Forjada en el siglo XX*  
*Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas, Spain;*  
*IVAM, Centre Julio González, Valencia, Spain;*  
*Musée des Beaux-Arts et de la Dentelle de Calais, Calais, France*  
*Triennale der Kleinplastik (7): Afrika-Europa, Les Écoles philosophiques*  
*Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, Südwest LB Forum, Stuttgart, Germany*  
*Bénin-Bénin, Gisteren-Tussen-Morgen, Van Reekum Museum, Apeldoorn, Netherlands*

1997

*Lumière Noire, Château de Tanlay, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Tanlay, France*

1995

*1st Johannesburg Biennale – Africus, Johannesburg, South Africa*

1994–1995

*Otro país: escalas africanas*  
*Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas, Spain*  
*Fundación La Caixa, Palma de Mallorca, Spain*  
*Palau de la Virreina, Barcelona, Spain*

1994

*Rencontres africaines, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France*

1993

*Ouidah 92. The First International Festival of Vodun Arts and Cultures, Ouidah, Benin*

1992

*1st Dakar Biennale – Dak'Art 92, Dakar, Senegal*

MAGNIN-A

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

*Calixte Dakpogan*, Centre Culturel Français, Cotonou, Benin



All Past Exhibitions

Reconfiguring an African Icon  
to the Mask by Modern and Contemporary Artists from Three Conti



## Reconfiguring an African Icon: Odes to the Mask by Modern and Contemporary Artists from Three Continents

MARCH 8–AUGUST 21, 2011

### Exhibition Overview

Works featured in this installation are highly creative re-imaginings of the iconic form of the African mask. Among them are sculptural assemblages made of incongruous combinations of discarded materials by two contemporary artists from the Republic of Benin, Romuald Hazoumé (b. 1962) and Calixte Dakpogan (b. 1958). These ironic tributes to the mask as the African form of expression most renowned in the West are considered within a wider art historical context through their juxtapositions with works in a variety of media by modern and contemporary American artists. The celebrated photograph by Man Ray (1890–1976), *Noire et Blanche*, recent interpretations in glass by influential sculptor Lynda Benglis (b. 1941), and composite creations by Willie Cole (b. 1955) are among these.

The installation is a collaboration between the Museum's departments of Nineteenth-Century, Modern, and Contemporary Art and Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas.