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Art Kelen

MONTHLY REPORT, NO. 03

State of Contemporary *African Art*

Contemporary art from Africa and its diasporas, observed month after month: works, artists, exhibitions and market.

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Cheveux de feu, 2025.
Colette Diallo.

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

Monthly report on contemporary African art

The Monthly Artists and Collector Report is an Art Kelen publication devoted to the news and developments of contemporary African art. Published once a month, in French and English, it gathers and analyses publicly available information on the artists, the works, the market and the dynamics shaping the sector, in Africa and across its diasporas.

This framing is deliberate. Contemporary African art now develops through scenes, markets and circulations that reach well beyond the continent's borders. Over the month of October, a Ghanaian artist took over the whole of a Paris institution and brought nine others with him. Lubumbashi turned its own residents into cartographers of their city. In Nairobi, a sale of East African art cleared close to ninety per cent of its lots, and three of its five leading results were by artists still working.

Each issue opens with the works, exhibitions and artists that marked the month, in Africa and across its diasporas. It then turns to developments in the market, representation, auctions and fairs, before setting out the current opportunities and the key dates ahead.

Our method

The factual information in this report is dated and verified against publicly available sources. Where necessary, we distinguish the date of an event from the date it was published. Where information rests solely on an announcement, we say so. Analysis is clearly identified as such.

Who it is for

This report is for collectors who want to understand their acquisitions better, for artists who want to situate their practice in a sector in motion, and for the curators, gallerists and institutions who follow the market's developments.

Members of the Art Kelen Circle receive the full report on publication. A preview is available to the public.

ART KELEN · THE PLATFORM

One platform, three regions

Art Kelen brings together an online gallery, virtual exhibitions, an editorial desk, a membership community and a consultancy, under a single curatorial direction. The platform works across Africa, Europe and the Middle East. This report is published each month in French and English.

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FOREWORD

Foreword

After a September that restarted the art year, October confirmed the momentum. In Europe, several major events put contemporary African creation in the foreground, while across the continent a run of first exhibitions and new spaces opened within weeks of each other.

In Paris, the Fondation Cartier opened *The Harvest Season*, a large exhibition devoted to the Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama, who invited nine artists and collectives to take part in the project. In Lubumbashi, the ninth biennale opened around the archives of the philosopher Valentin Yves Mudimbe and presented a subjective atlas of the city drawn by close to a hundred of its own residents. In Maputo, three floors of a commercial tower were given over to a question about artificial intelligence and inherited knowledge. In Abidjan and in Dakar, artists opened first solo exhibitions within days of each other.

On the art market, Nairobi stood out in October. On 28 October the Art Auction East Africa sale, held with Strauss & Co, recorded a sell-through rate of close to 90 per cent, with 61 of 68 lots sold. Among the five leading results were two contemporary artists still at work, Salah Elmur and Peterson Kamwathi. That is worth setting beside the South African sales of September, where living artists were less present among the most sought-after lots.

In London, the Modern and Contemporary *African Art* sale held by Bonhams on 21 October showed another face of the market. The leading results were dominated by historical figures, while works by two of the most traded living diaspora painters did not find buyers in the same week.

This issue also reflects the geographic range of the scenes it covers. From Accra to Nairobi, from Lubumbashi to Maputo, by way of Dakar, Abidjan and Rabat, the initiatives are multiplying, and no single capital holds the month. Twelve of the twenty exhibitions in this issue opened on the continent.

October was also marked by several significant distinctions for African artists. In Gothenburg, Zanele Muholi received the Hasselblad Award 2026, which recognises her photographic work. At Frieze, Unathi Mkonto received the Nicoletta Fiorucci Foundation Prize. In Johannesburg, in its fortieth year, the Absa L'Atelier gave its Gerard Sekoto Award to an artist born in 1999.

The results of these different sales are a reminder of how varied the dynamics of the African art market are. Nairobi recorded strong performances in October, while the London results present a more contrasted picture. Taken together they describe a market that is selective rather than one that is simply rising or falling.

This report is built on dated and verified information, with the aim of giving a rigorous and documented account of artistic activity across the continent and its diasporas.

Daffa Konaté

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