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Ask a question about the African art market, and many experts will be quick to tell you that there is no such thing. How could one market possibly encompass 54 countries, 1.2 billion people, and countless aesthetic traditions?

It can't. But that won't stop the global art market from trying. The commercial sector has a way of co-opting talent into the international art slipstream (sometimes flattening history and context in the process). It has done so with artists – and entire movements – from Asia and Latin America in the past. Africa may be next in line.

The seeds are there: strong art schools, a growing number of high-net-worth individuals, and rapid urbanisation. Researchers project that the continent will be home to at least nine cities of more than 10 million people by 2050. Meanwhile, museums in Europe and North America have hosted an unprecedented number of shows of African art in recent years, while art fairs dedicated to the field have sprung up worldwide, including 1-54 in New York, Marrakech, and London, where its seventh edition opens this week, and the newer Art X Lagos, which kicks off its fourth edition in Nigeria in November.

Activity in cities such as Marrakech and Lagos is “opening the eyes of collectors,” says Kavita Chellaram, founder of the Lagos-based auction house Arthouse Contemporary. “African collectors from different regions are now interested in buying African art from different regions. There will be an African art market. It's just the beginning.”

What's Ahead

Today, Africa's art market has plenty of room to grow. Fewer than 1,000 works were sold at auction on the continent in the first six months of 2019, according to the artnet Price Database. Unlike Asia, where Hong Kong has emerged as a hub for the trade, Africa lacks a preeminent art-market capital.

And while the continent's local collector base is growing steadily – Sotheby's fourth dedicated auction of modern and contemporary African art in April was dominated by African buyers and generated a total of \$3 million, above its presale

high estimate of \$2.7 million – it is still nascent compared with the US, China, and Europe.

What is missing? “You need an infrastructure,” says Hannah O'Leary, head of Modern and contemporary African art at Sotheby's. “On the whole, there is a real lack of public support. We are seeing lots of raw talent, but we need more of a market structure in order to support their careers.”

Some ambitious institutions are already rising. Over the past two years, museums like Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town, the Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden in Marrakech, and the Museum of Black Civilisations in Dakar have launched with a mission to write their own contemporary art histories. Meanwhile, artists who have already found commercial success, such as Hassan Hajjaj and Ibrahim Mahama, have set up institutions of their own to nurture young talent at home.

A Closer Look

A single hub for such a massive and heterogenous continent may never materialise. Instead, Rakeb Sile, cofounder of the gallery Addis Fine Art, predicts that “there will be and should be different hubs in several regions of Africa.”

We have assembled a guide to six of these dynamic emerging art capitals: Accra, Addis Ababa, Cape Town, Dakar, Lagos, and Marrakech. Each city has its own heritage, culture, and distinctive history with colonialism – resulting in unique artistic production.

Painting remains most popular in East Africa, which is home to the two oldest art schools on the continent, while West Africa has fostered more experimentation with large-scale installations and performance-based work. Both sides of the continent also have a rich tradition of photography.

“There shouldn't be any question about quality and talent in Africa,” O'Leary says. And where talent goes, the art world follows. The presence of an increasingly wealthy clientele to cater to certainly helps. “When we talk about buyer potential in Africa,” she adds, “there shouldn't be any doubt.”

Rebecca Anne Proctor, artnet.com ■

2 Do not fear the past

- Do not fear the past.
It is ugly
but it is ours,
Do not hold on to lies
- 5 That you were fed when you were young.
Learn the history of your people
Find the truth
to free your soul from evil
Learn the Qur-an
- 10 Learn the bible
Find the meaning of life and religion.
Do not fear the past.
It is painful
but it is real
- 15 Blood was spilt and people died
but love and unity had survived.
Learn the tongue of your ancestors
Reconnect with the roots of your blood
Find the knowledge
- 20 That was stolen
Find the life that was robbed from us.
Do not fear the past.
Embrace it
Let it teach you the wisdom of your race
- 25 Take its lessons and live by them
Own the identity that was erased.
Do not fear the past,
Do not hate it.
Do not fear the past,
- 30 Learn about it.
Let it teach you
Let it nurture you
Let it remind you, of who you are

Zuhura Seng'enge ■

3

Mary Sibande in the
"I Came Apart in the Seams"
exhibition, Somerset House,
London UK – Sept. 29, 2019

TRANSLATION

- 1 Translate the following passage into French: text 1 from
"The seeds are there" to "in November" (l. 14-26).

SYNTHESIS

- 2 Write a commentary on the three documents. Use
the following guidelines and take into account the
specificities of the documents (500 words).
- Explain how art helps link the past, present and future.
 - Analyse how modern art illustrates Africa's
development.
 - Show how art is a powerful tool to create a new Africa.



