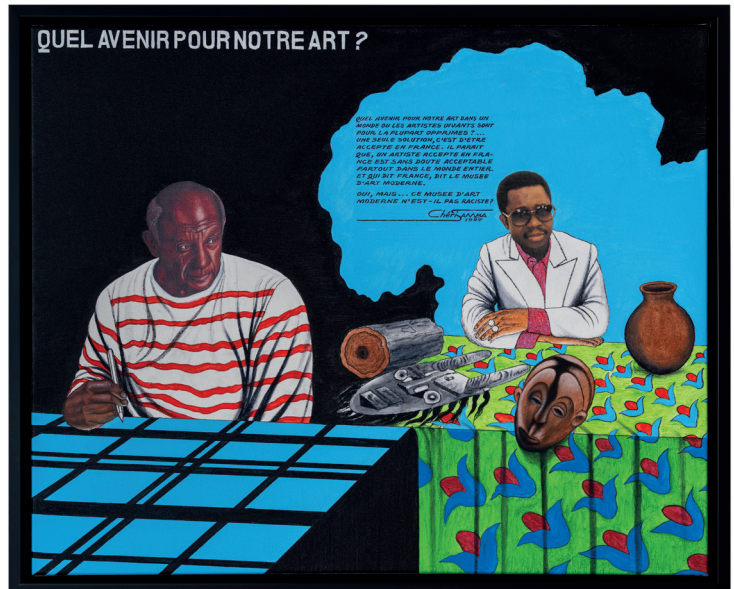


KITOKO

Opening 23.04.2025 | 6-9PM
Exhibition 24.04 - 24.05.2025
Venue BRUSSELS - GALLERY



Chéri Samba, «Quel avenir pour notre art ?» 1997, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 81 cm

For the first time, the **Claes Contemporary & Modern Gallery** opens its doors to an exhibition bringing together Congolese painters from the early 1970s to the present day.

At the dawn of Independence, as art academies flourished across the country, young artists sought to build artistic careers outside conventional codes and pictorial traditions. In 1978, the group exhibition « *Art Partout* » at the Kinshasa Academy of Fine Arts, bringing together both « academicians » and « self-taught » artists, introduced to the public many artists who proclaimed themselves as « popular artists ». Narrators of urban life and guardians of collective memory, their paintings reimagined the style of their predecessors from the Hangar workshop, embracing figurative art inspired by daily life, political events, and social realities—imagery in which the entire population could recognize itself.

Since the early 2000s, a new generation of artists has broken away from academic principles, sparking a true creative effervescence driven by the desire to stand out. Today, public auction houses and numerous national and international exhibitions actively contribute to the recognition of these talented artists.

The **Kitoko** exhibition aims to follow this path, highlighting a notion of « Beauty » not as it is conceived, but as it is. The paintings of Moke, Chéri Samba, Bandoma, and Vitshois do not suggest an idea or a perception of beauty; they paint what they see. They translate onto paper, canvas, sacks, and cardboard the beauty of their country and Congolese culture.

Ultimately, isn't this the very essence of the word *kitoko*—a simple yet powerful word that embodies aesthetics and appreciation ?

¹ «Kitoko» means «beautiful» or «pretty» in Lingala, a language widely spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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