

## *Expressions d'Afrique*

# Inside Jean Pigozzi's Collection

**An exhibition on contemporary art from Africa with works of visionary collector Jean Pigozzi, curated by Dr. Jérôme Neutres, independent curator and writer, whose recent project was the acclaimed retrospective on Joan Miró at the Grand Palais (2018)**

**Introducing to Switzerland for the first time, the collection which transformed the MoMA's vision on African Art**

**"In putting together my collection, I wanted to speak as little as possible about the dark part of Africa. On the contrary, I wanted to show a happy Africa, its visual richness, its luxurious nature, the energy of its inhabitants... I have always said that I wanted to be Africa's visual ambassador." Jean Pigozzi**

Only three months after the announcement by the MoMA of having received 45 works of African contemporary art from the collector Jean Pigozzi – a major donation described as “a transformative gift” by the museum, Galerie Gmurzynska is proud to present *Expressions d'Afrique – Inside Jean Pigozzi's Collection*.

### **The collection**

Artist, collector and entrepreneur Jean Pigozzi started his collection of contemporary art from Africa in 1989, under the influence of the groundbreaking exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. With the time and support of his curator André Magnin, thanks to his (and also the MoMA's) “single-minded vision, dedication, and passion,” he assembled one of the most important and largest collections of African contemporary art in the world, named the Contemporary African Art Collection (CAAC).

The collection has never had the intention of representing the different movements in Africa. It was Pigozzi's personal adventure and passion; the result of a long-term exchange and personal relationships with African artists.

### **The Exhibition**

*Expressions d'Afrique*, curated by former curator of the Grand Palais **Dr. Jérôme Neutres**, presents for the first time in Switzerland a selection of works from this well-known collection, which spans a wide spectrum of artistic creation from the African continent and contains a diversity of forms of expression.

The title of the exhibition is a playful reference to **Raymond Roussel's** foundational text *Impressions d'Afrique*. This text and its evocative projection of an idea of Africa, had a major influence on such major artists as André Breton or Marcel Duchamp. Today, this exhibition puts the focus on the “expressions” of Africa created by the continent's best artists over the last 30 years.

## The artists

*Expressions d'Afrique* includes works by artists that will be part of the new, upcoming presentation of the permanent collection of the MoMA: sculptures by Beninese artist **Romuald Hazoumè** (born 1962), who won recognition for his “canister masks,” which call daily life into question while proposing a radical interpretation of the madness of the world today; paintings by the prestigious Congolese painters **Moké** (1950–2001) and **Chéri Samba** (born 1956), founders of the “Zaire School of Popular Painting,” the vibrant and colorful artistic movement that emerged in Kinshasa in the wake of the country’s independence; and drawings from the series *Musée du visage africain* by the Ivorian encyclopedist and universalist **Frédéric Bruly Bouabré** (1923–2014), one of the most fascinating artistic personalities in Africa, who endeavored to create a new visual language to explain the entire world.

A further highlight of the exhibition will be the utopian Architecture by **Bodys Isek Kingelez** (Congolese, 1948–2015), who created models of imaginary cities for a more harmonious society. Kingelez’ works were the subject of the *City Dreams* exhibition in 2018.

The exhibition will also present works by two of the best-known woman artists from the continent – both of which have been pioneers in reinterpreting traditional arts – paintings by the legendary South African artist **Esther Mahlangu** (born 1935), and terracotta sculptures by the Senegalese sculptor **Seni Awa Camara** (born 1945).

Furthermore, it is an honor to present paintings and sculptures by **Georges Lilanga** (Tanzania, 1934–2005). The presentation of his work in a major exhibition of African artists in Washington DC in 1978 had an important influence on the young American graffiti artists, specifically Keith Haring, who acknowledged Lilanga’s influence in his art.

## Galerie Gmurzynska

Galerie Gmurzynska, founded in 1965 in Cologne, has developed an important corpus of exhibitions and publications related to key moments of the avant-garde, as well as projects connecting contemporary artists to their modern roots.

African art played a key role in the genealogy of Modern Art and had an indisputable influence on Surrealism and Dadaism, which have an important presence in the program of Galerie Gmurzynska.

More recently, the artistic explorations of African cultural identity, as well as the mentioned duality between the impressions and the expressions of an African imaginary, has been a main subject in the exhibitions that Galerie Gmurzynska has dedicated to Cuban artist Wifredo Lam.

Today, Galerie Gmurzynska is proud to present a unique survey on African contemporary art.

## List of Artists

**Esther Mahlangu** (South Africa, b. 1935)

**Calixte Dakpogan** (Benin, b. 1958)

**Romuald Hazoumè** (Benin, b. 1962)

**Barthélémy Toguo** (Cameroun, b. 1967)

**Frédéric Bruly Bouabré** (Ivory Coast, b. 1923- d. 2014)

**Seni Awa Camara** (Senegal, b. 1945)

**George Lilanga** (Tanzania, b. 1934 – d. 2005)

**Pierre Bodo** (Democratic Republic of Congo, b. 1953 -d. 2015)

**Bodys Isek Kingelez** (Democratic Republic of Congo, b. 1948 – d. 2015)

**Chéri Chérin** (Democratic Republic of Congo, b. 1955)

**Chéri Samba** (Democratic Republic of Congo, b. 1956)

**Moké** (Democratic Republic of Congo, b. 1950 – d. 2001)

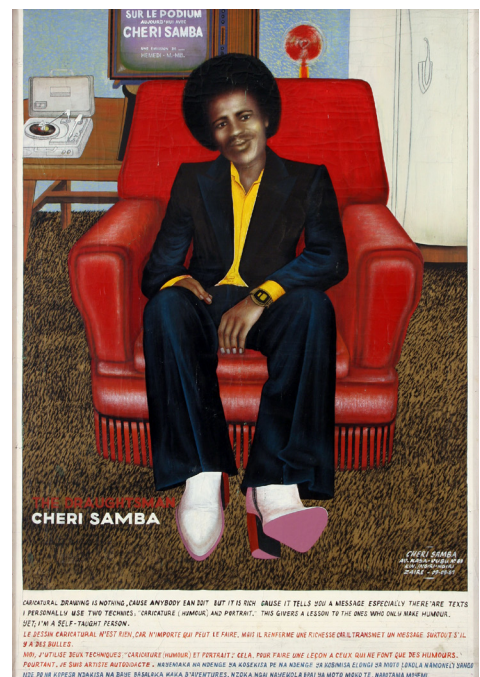
## SELECTED WORKS



Moké, *La nuit chaude a la cité*, 1999



Romuald Hazoumé, *Claudia Maigre*, 2005



Chéri Samba, *The Draughtsman, Chéri Samba*, 1981

For more information on the gallery and its artists and activities please visit  
[www.gmurzynska.com](http://www.gmurzynska.com)

**galerie gmurzynska**  
20th century masters since 1965  
[www.gmurzynska.com](http://www.gmurzynska.com)