

# ETHAN COHEN

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## BATIK d'AFRIQUE



Ethan Cohen New York presents BATIK d'AFRIQUE featuring Aboudia, Gonçalo Mabunda, Malick Sidibé, and Moffat Takadiwa. The exhibition will run from November 13, 2014 to January 10, 2015.

Drawing from a distinct group of artists, BATIK d'AFRIQUE showcases the depth and diversity of African contemporary art today. While aggression and hostility seem apparent, such themes are nevertheless challenged by ideas of innocence and transcendence through the transformation of subject and medium. By refusing to limit interpretations of their work, these artists expose infinite variations in the human experience.

Aboudia's powerful *nouchi* style, drawn from the street culture of children in his home city of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, reveals an ominously uncertain inner world punctuated by stridently energetic strokes. Although his deliberately layered urban landscapes convey the turbulence and synchronicity of the present, these sentiments are expressed with an undeniable youthful vitality tempered by compassion. Raw moments become dreamlike, as multiple elements coalesce into a single vision.

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Reflecting on the collective memory of Mozambique, Gonçalo Mabunda repurposes weapons of war as art, creating masks which call attention to the formation of power through violence. By converting objects such as bullets and machinery, however, Mabunda relieves the weapons of their prior association and imbues them with new life in the African tradition of mask-making, often with lively characteristics which contradict their original intent.

In conveying the power of photography, Malick Sidibé remarks that "I don't like sadness." In this unique collection of photographs, exclusively shown for the first time, the artist evokes a deeply personal and humanistic sensibility as he captures the dynamic interactions of both an individual and societal coming of age. His portraits of the vibrant youth culture of Bamako, Mali not only elicit a sense of celebration and elation, but also an intrinsic awareness of the importance of experience filtered through self-perception.

Appropriating discarded objects such as spray paint can tops and plastic bottle parts for his organic multimedia projects, Zimbabwean artist Moffat Takadiwa transforms everyday items with a spirituality infused with magic. Significantly, his work invites outside interpretation, engaging the viewer in a dialogue, which often results in the spontaneous and unexpected. By elevating the refuse of society, Takadiwa forces the viewer to consider the implications of everyday consumption.

As initial judgments are questioned in our understanding of global contemporary art, we are invited to reflect on the intricacies of consciousness. Through the thread of human experience, these artists ask us to consider the implications of reality; what seems apparent is often less so, conjured by imagination and interpretation, transcending ordinary existence. Exposing us to such incessant possibilities are the diverse aesthetics at work for art being produced in Africa today.

Ethan Cohen Fine Arts extends a special thanks to Issiaka Toure for his generous support of this exhibition.

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