

Art Paris, 25th anniversary

[17 Mar 2023]



Founded in 1999, Art Paris celebrates its 25th anniversary this year at the Grand Palais Éphémère. The Parisian fair has established itself over the years as a prominent event in the art fair in France and beyond. After more than a quarter of a century of showcasing modern and contemporary art, the fair continues to innovate, promoting French art while exploring foreign creations as well. This 25th edition – from 30 March to 2 April 2023 – is bringing together 134 art galleries from 25 countries. The fair's guest curators, Marc Donnadieu and Amanda Abi Khalil, have decided to invite visitors to reflect on two societal themes: commitment and exile. The work of over 900 artists will be exhibited, including 16 solo shows and 10 duo shows scattered throughout the fair, which allow for a more in-depth focus on the artists' work. In addition, 9 galleries have been selected in the *Promesses* sector dedicated to young galleries and emerging creation. Art Paris is also a pioneer in from an ecological perspective and once again this year, the fair is committed to a unique eco-design approach.

In partnership with Art Paris for many years, Artprice is pleased to offer a three-part interview this year, featuring a) a chat with exhibition curator Marc Donnadieu in which he expounds his vision of the theme of 'commitment', b) an interview with the Portuguese-Angolan gallery *This is not a White Cube* selected in the *Promesses* sector, and c) a discussion with artist Angèle Etoundi Essamba whose work will be seen at Galerie Carole Kvasnevski and who was selected among the 20 artists in the Art & Commitment route put together by Marc Donnadieu.

Marc Donnadieu, exhibition curator

Can you tell us about your curatorial approach for Art Paris? Is it different from a museum exhibition?

It's totally different since it's not a question of hanging museum works in a dedicated space within the fair, but of creating a thematic route through the stands of the fair based on a given theme, that of commitment. This route has therefore been developed in close collaboration with the galleries and the artists they represent.

Could you explain how this route will be conducted and what guided your intuition as a curator?

The route will be indicated on the fair's plan and guide, and small texts accompany each selected artwork on each stand. My overall intuition was guided by the approach of the artists and the works they have produced. I identified various forms of commitment towards art, history, politics, colonialism, society, identity, climate, etc., as well as towards the act of making artworks themselves: a commitment to being an artist and what that means today.

What were your selection criteria for the galleries and artists?

First and foremost, finding works and artists that seemed relevant to the theme I had chosen. The prospecting began right after Art Paris 2022 and was refined throughout the rest of the year. There has always been a high level of 'newness' at Art Paris. New applications led to new choices of artists and artworks. Keeping only 20 in the end was difficult. But beyond the 20 selected works for this route, I hope that the idea of commitment to art and to its creation will spread to all of Art Paris 2023 as a whole.

Should the theme addressed be a personal conviction above all?

On the one hand, it reflects a certain history of the art world in France since the 19th century that I wanted to recall, and on the other hand, it reflects our present era. French artistic production seems to me to be increasingly committed to today's major issues. I simply wanted to highlight that. One could say that it is the personal conviction of the artists, but when it is expressed through an artwork, it gives it a broader dimension and one that everyone can recognize. These are forms of revelation, self-awareness, awareness of others, of the

world around us, and of its history.

What is your relationship with the French art scene? Do you think its dynamism is in line with its place on the global art market?

For more than forty years, I have had the immense pleasure of working in the heart of the French art scene. There have been meteoric rises and as well as dark years, but over time, an astonishing degree of renewal. I have more and more confidence in the young generation of artists, gallery owners, and collectors who are taking their first steps today, even though I know that these are often difficult and perilous. Now, it is just a matter of not clipping their wings!

I believe that France has a decisive place in the art market. Look at the number of French galleries present at international fairs or with addresses abroad! Look at the number of foreign galleries that are setting up in Paris! Look at the number of French artists represented by foreign galleries, some of which are top-notch! It's fantastic! Look at a fair like Art Paris that has focused on the French scene and that is meeting with ever-increasing success! Look at Paris Photo, which is the most important fair dedicated to this medium in the world! Look at the number of foreign curators who come to work in French museums, and, likewise, the number of French curators who work in museums located outside France... and not in the least important ones! What attractiveness! What vitality! What recognition!

Sonia Ribeiro, Galerie This is not a white cube, section *Promesses*

Can you tell me why all the works selected for your presence at Art Paris are by Portuguese artists ?

The selection developed and curated specifically for Art Paris 2023 is based not on the question of nationality, but rather on specific curatorial values that gravitate around the ideas of recovery of cultural heritage, sustainability, ecology, and the construction of languages of disruption. The project offers a counterpoint to the imposition of the mechanics of the purist laws of the art market that have led to the globalization of artistic languages and discourses in the contemporary art world.

Through these topics, this project also aims to encourage and promote reflection on how contemporary art has asserted itself globally as a vector of change.

Could you say a few words about the work you consider the most important in your selection and why? What are its strengths?

In accordance with a curatorial philosophy that emphasizes the gallery's transversal orientation, the works under consideration were selected collectively for artistic value as well as as a global project of a site-specific nature.

This joint project, despite the unicellular validity of each piece, provides an immersive experience of the works by the two artists between whom THIS IS NOT A WHITE CUBE intends to create dialogue – Manuela Pimentel and Vanessa Barragão.



MANUELA PIMENTEL, *PÉS NA TERRA*, 2023 Acrylic and varnish on street posters and canvas, 145 x 177 cm

Vanessa BARRAGÃO's work materializes the subject of sustainability through textile art. Significantly, her large-scale works and tapestries are deeply inspired by nature and are rooted in a fully-sustainable approach. Within her creative, organic, and meditative process, she employs an ecological handmade method, which involves recycling wasted materials from Portuguese factories, and transforming them into marine gardens through various traditional techniques, such as crochet, weaving, embroidery, and macramé, involving local communities. Vanessa employs a sustainable approach by resourcing and recovering traditional techniques – something that, although employed differently, deeply resonates with Manuela PIMENTEL. If Vanessa's commitment to art is indivisible from her commitment to the contemporary world, Manuela's commitment is rooted in cultural heritage, and history. In her work, translated into compositions of installed sculptural-like paintings, Manuela Pimentel reconfigures the place of the Portuguese tile as a sacralized object of local collective memory. In doing this, she intends to scrutinize our relationship with the sense of perennality and ephemerality of a legacy and to explore the poetic sense of the idea of impermanence that underlies the artistic core. The

heterogeneity of mediums involved in her practice is associated with the erudite historical culture of the tile – profusely decorative, from the Portuguese “golden age” – or to the vernacular culture – stemming from the observation of public and private spaces of the quotidian – reveals the complexity and amplitude of Manuela Pimentel’s field of action and artistic language. This factor, which we can translate as the exploration of ambiguity, is nourished by the application of dualism in a sublime game of contrasts. This incorporates not only an appropriation and reinvention of the visualities and canons of the Baroque but also a declared expression of an aesthetic assimilated by Manuela Pimentel from “Street art.” The latter is revealed in the concreteness of the materials with which she simulates mural structures, and in her use of graphics of street posters, eroded by time and, astutely, subtracted from the street. Crucially, this aspect of resorting to a sustainable process of artistic creation also links both artists – whether by recovering recycled fabrics, as in Vanessa’s process or by giving old street posters a new life, as Manuela does, both artists are deeply connected with the sphere of environmental activism/artivism.

Included in the “Promises” section of the fair, what expectations do you have for your first participation?

First of all, we tend to think about art fairs as huge networking opportunities. The artist’s and the gallery’s work will be exposed to a whole new ecosystem and community of curators, art buyers, art lovers, collectors, art consultants, and art press and critics. For this very reason, exhibiting in this format and at an art fair in a mature market such as Paris is a valuable opportunity in any phase of an artist’s career, favoring direct exposure to a deeply specialized audience.

Fairs are structures that are not tied exclusively to the mechanics of the art market pure and simple. They have been revealing themselves over the years as meeting platforms between the different agents of the contemporary art system and are gaining increasing expression in the areas concerning the validation and production of artistic content and the generation of knowledge.

What relationship do you have with French collectors and the French public?

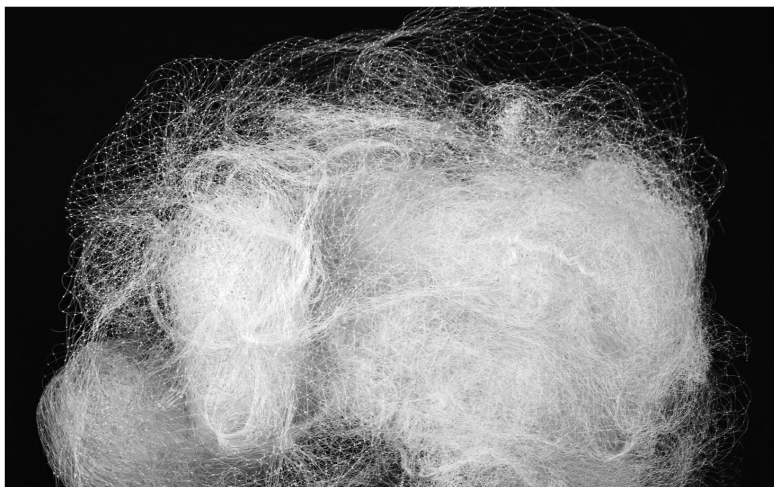
The French community is a really dear one for the gallery as THIS IS NOT A WHITE CUBE has been operating locally since its foundation in 2016. Being back in Paris is also an opportunity for the gallery to reengage its local audience.

Not only in French territory, through the long last participation in art fairs and art projects but also in Lisbon and in Luanda – where the gallery is based – we have been creating over the years tight connections with the French community and institutions and value their role as supporters and creators of culture given their historical connection to the art world.



VANESSA BARRAGÃO, AFTERLIFE III, 2023 Wool, Tencel, jute, brass, latch hook, crochet, and other fiber manipulations, 215 x 160 x 20 cm

Angèle Etoundi Essamba, artist exhibited by the Carole Kvasnevski gallery and selected for the course proposed by Art & Commitment





Tisser une nouvelle histoire 3 (2019), [série Renaissance], Black & white photo mounted on antireflex plexiglas, dibond and baroque frame, limited edition of 15 copies, 100 x 70 cm – 150 x 100 cm Copyright Angèle Etoundi Essamba, Courtesy Galerie Carole Kvasnevski

Your work will be exhibited by the Carole Kvasnevski Gallery at the Art Paris fair around the theme Art & Commitment. How do you situate yourself in relation to this theme?

This is a theme that seems obvious to me and is subtly reflected in my work. Art is not a luxury reserved for an elite few, as many may think, but a vital need. For the creator, it is first and foremost a means of liberation, of expressing oneself, of communicating a message, of questioning, of denouncing. Art is for everyone because it has the power to capture attention, to cultivate the imagination, and to elicit emotions from the viewer. Through their creations, artists have the power to change perspectives, inspire, foster future possibilities, make people dream, and bring viewers to a greater awareness of other realities and approaches to the world. Beyond the aesthetic aspects and harmonious compositions in my work, I explore questions of gender, race, (double) identity and power. There is a strong need to encourage human reflection that aims at raising awareness and invites the viewer to change their views of others, their relationships with others, and the place of others in the world.

You place the African woman at the heart of your artistic and human concerns, do you advocate for the democratization of women artists? What do you think of the place of women in art?

In some ways, the 'African woman' is my muse and it is around her that all my work revolves. My support of women in Africa is a peaceful support expressed through my creations. I made photography my daily practice because I was confronted with the absence of images with which I could identify myself in the environment I lived in. That pushed me to create my own images, but to give them a universal resonance. My questions, my aspirations, resonate with those of other women..

Yes, I advocate for the democratization of women artists. I encourage young girls to embrace artistic vocations, especially photography, so that women can also be part of art history and contribute to inspiring other women. It is true that we have come a long way since the 19th century when becoming a woman artist was a real challenge. In those days women did not have access to many of the training opportunities available to men and could only train through private lessons.

With the emergence of private academies, the situation has changed and women can finally train for art professions and exist. Today, they have brilliantly conquered all disciplines of art and genres and there are numerous women artists, theorists and art historians. However, even though the times have changed,, women artists are still under-represented, except in museums dedicated to art created by women. In our Southern cultures, being a woman artist is often poorly perceived and they are often marginalized. Is not the legacy that we aspire to leave to future generations that of a more just and egalitarian world where everyone can flourish freely? Women have a major role to play in this; through their struggles, their challenges, their voices, they bring another perspective to the world.

My work questions the stereotypical representations of black women conveyed by Western media, where she is often "exoticized," submissive, passive, dependent, or relegated to certain roles – such as a peasant, a market vendor or a housewife. I deconstruct these clichés by representing African women in a symbolic and aesthetic dimension and in a contemporary context where they can recognize themselves, project themselves, and build new messages to convey to the world. Through my lens, I reclaim the black female body and show that like any other body, it is also inhabited by life and its mysteries. It is a body that questions, denounces, protests, marvels, speaks of struggles, achievements, fragility and hope, strength and resilience. Women who reclaim their identity and rewrite their own history, a

of struggles, achievements, fragility and hope, strength and resilience. French has reclaimed their identity and rewrote their own history, a history rooted in their reality.”

Recognized on the international art scene, your work has notably been frequently exhibited in Paris. What relationship do you have with the French public and collectors?

Having grown up in the Parisian suburbs, I have a very strong connection with France, where I spent my formative years (ages 9-20). I remember my first camera, an Instamatic gifted to me by one of my best friends from high school, where we were both members of a photography club. I will never forget the excitement of holding a camera for the first time, it was simply magical. My very first solo exhibition in France was held in Paris in 1989, at a small gallery located on Boulevard Saint Germain. Since then, other exhibitions have followed, thanks to my gallery Carole Kvasnevski, which regularly showcases my work in France and at art fairs (AKAA, the BAD and now Art Paris) and introduces it to a wide audience and new collectors. The French public, collectors, and art enthusiasts are very important to me and I am working to maintain and develop this connection in order to see my works also enter French museum collections.

> More information on Art Paris (<https://www.artparis.com/fr/edition>)

ART PARIS 2023


30 March – 2 April

134 galleries from 25 countries

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