

# OWANTO

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Owanto is a multi-cultural Gabonese artist born in Paris, France. She was raised in Libreville, Gabon, and later moved to Europe to study Philosophy, Literature and Languages at the Institut Catholique de Paris in Madrid, Spain.

Owanto's multidisciplinary practice emerges from a 30-year career where she explores a variety of media, including photography, sculpture, painting, video, sound, installation and performative works. A practice that enables her to engage with consciousness through the notion of memory, both personal and collective.

In 2009, Owanto represented the Republic of Gabon at the 53rd Venice Biennale with a solo show entitled "The Lighthouse of Memory - Go Nogé Mènè", being the very first artist from Central Africa to exhibit solo in a National Pavilion. Through the use of archives and found documents her proposal traces the past to shape the future, honouring the title "Go Nogé Mènè" which means "building the future" in her mother tongue. Central to her artistic proposal is the question "OÙ ALLONS NOUS?" (Where Are We Going?). A poetic, omnipresent, important, fundamental and universal probe.

Owanto's interest in memory leads her to construct new utopian worlds while reflecting on the concepts of identity, transformation and evolution. As the daughter of a Gabonese mother and French father, influenced by Africa, Europe, colonialism and the earth, the artist explores cross-cultural and transhistorical dialogues. She seeks to interrogate the meaning of existence and of her personal and shared history.

Her current projects focus on the female condition, emancipation and the breaking of silence. The artist creates a listening platform for women within cultural institutions introducing a shift in narrative and hegemonic discourse.

Her work on this matter reflects upon the psychological concept of resilience by exploring the notion of healing, repair and transformation. The viewer is thus confronted with a delicate and powerful protest as in Flowers Series where "the flowers mask the pain and symbolize a re-birth".

The feminine, as creative energy, is a constant in Owanto's narratives and is intimately linked to her childhood where women represent the pillars of the family. For Owanto, the family is a societal ideal in that it stands for social unity, the result of 'love thy neighbour'.

Light, both as a concept and as a medium, is another key element in Owanto's work. Her neon and light paintings symbolize what guides us to a sanctuary place, where dark and silent spaces are illuminated.

Owanto's creative force stems from her belief in the ability of art to transform consciousness. Her work sheds new light on difficult and relevant issues which prevent us from ignoring what takes place around us. Owanto's concern for social issues has compelled her to campaign for relevant but uncomfortable and often ignored topics.

Her work has been exhibited in numerous international institutions, galleries and contemporary art fairs. Some of the most important recent exhibitions are: "One Thousand Voices" (Zeitz MOCAA, South Africa), "Material Insanity" (MACAAL, Morocco), "One Thousand Voices" (MADRE, Italy), "All Things Being Equal ...", (Permanent Collection of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa)," Dance with Me "(AAF African Artist Foundation, LagosPhoto Festival), AKAA Also Known as Africa, (Art Fair Paris with Voice Gallery), 1:54 (Contemporary African Art Fair, London with Voice Gallery), "Imago Mundi, MADE IN SPAIN "(CAC Málaga and Fondazione Giorgio Cini)," Urban Art Malaga MAUS SOHO "(CAC Málaga)," Earth Matters: Land and Material in the Arts of Africa "(Smithsonian National Museum of African Art and Fowler Museum UCLA)," Fifty Years of African Independence "(Unesco House , Paris), "Gabon, my Land, my Future" (Libreville, Gabon), ARCO Madrid (with Galeria Maior), "World Academy" (Expo Milano).

## **Solo Exhibitions**

### **2019**

"One Thousand Voices" Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), Cape Town, South Africa. Curated by Gcotyelwa Mashiga and Sakhi Gcina

"One Thousand Voices" Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina (MADRE), Naples, Italy. Organized by Voice Gallery

### **2018**

"Flowers" Voice Gallery, Marrakech, Morocco

"Dance with Me" African Artist's Foundation (AAF), Lagos, Nigeria. Curated by Azu Nwagbogu

### **2016**

"Flowers" Conseil National, Monaco

### **2015**

Owanto "L'Atelier de l'artiste" In collaboration with Galeria Yusto-Giner, Art Marbella OFF, Marbella, Spain

### **2014**

"Here, Now." Dar Rhizlane Palace, Marrakech Biennale 5 OFF, Marrakech, Morocco

### **2013**

"PROTECT" Public art intervention, Jardins de Saint Martin, Monaco

### **2012**

"Où Allons Nous?" Voice Gallery, Marrakech, Morocco

### **2011**

"El Faro de la Memoria" Galería Maior, Espacio Atlantico, Vigo, Spain

"El Faro de la Memoria" Galería Maior, Palma de Mallorca, Spain

## **2009**

"The Lighthouse of Memory, Go Nogé Mènè" Galleria Ca' D'Oro, Rome, Italy

"The Lighthouse of Memory, Go Nogé Mènè" Republic of Gabon Pavilion, 53rd Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy

## **Group Exhibitions**

### **2019**

"Material Insanity" Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden (MACAAL), Marrakech, Morocco. Curated by Meriem Berrada and Janine Gaëlle Dieudji

### **2018**

OUR ANTHROPOCENE: ECO CRISES, The Center for Book Arts, New York, United States.

Organized by Gary van Wyk, Ph.D., Curated by Axis Gallery

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair London – Voice Gallery

### **2017**

LagosPhoto, Lagos, Nigeria. Curated by Azu Nwagbogu

AKAA Also Known as Africa Art Fair Paris – Voice Gallery

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair London – Voice Gallery

"All Things Being Equal..." Permanent Collection of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa

### **2016**

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair London – Voice Gallery

"Beauty" Centro de Exposiciones de Benalmádena, Benalmádena, Spain

"Made in Spain. Periplo por el arte español de hoy" MAD Antequera, Málaga, Spain

### **2015**

"Beauty" La Térmica, Málaga, Spain

"Arternativelight [5]" Chapiteau de Fontvieille, Monaco

"IMAGO MUNDI, Map of the New Art" Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, Italy

"Beauty" MAD Antequera, Málaga, Spain

"World Academy" Accademia di Brera, EXPO Milano 2015, Milan, Italy

"IMAGO MUNDI, Made in Spain" CAC Málaga, Málaga, Spain

### **2014**

"Arternativelight [4]: 21 Artistes pour le 21<sup>ème</sup> Siècle" Chapiteau de Fontvieille, Monaco

"DÓNDE VAMOS" Performance, Off the OFF Dak'Art, Dakar, Senegal

"Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa" The Fowler Museum at UCLA, Los Angeles, USA

### **2013**

"MAUS: Málaga arte urbano en el soho" CAC Málaga, Málaga, Spain

"Arternativelight [3]: Passion Ocean" Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, Monaco

"Earth Matters: Land as Material and Metaphor in the Arts of Africa" Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC, USA

ARCO Madrid 2013 – Galería Maior

"Be Aware" Espacio Elbutrón, Sevilla, Spain

### **2012**

"Neighbours" CAC Málaga, Málaga, Spain

"Arternativelight [2]" Chapiteau de Fontvieille, Monaco  
ARCO Madrid 2012 - Galeria Maior

### **2011**

Puma Creative Presents "Interpretations of Africa: Football, Art and Design" Design Museum,  
London, UK

"Arternativelight" Musée Naval de Monaco, Monaco  
ARCO Madrid – Galeria Maior

### **2010**

"Gabon: Ma Terre Mon Future" Site Gabon Expo, Libreville, Gabon

"Cinquantenaire des Indépendances Africaines" Maison de L'Unesco, Paris, France

### **Collections**

Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), South Africa

Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain

Luciano Benetton Collection, Spain