

OWANTO CV

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Owanto is a multi-cultural Gabonese artist. 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 40-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 last projects focused 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.

In recent times, Owanto's activist endeavors have led her to revisit painting as a means of self-discovery. Through this process, she seeks to forge a spiritual connection, rooted in the animist belief that all entities hold a vital essence. "Traces of the Timeless" embodies this vision, honoring the interconnectedness of our world and our place within it.

Her work has been exhibited in numerous international institutions, galleries and contemporary art fairs. Some of the most important recent exhibitions are: "Flowers Forever" (Kunsthalle München), "Rock My Soul II" (celebrated in Stockholm and curated by Eva Livijn and Sir Isaac Julien), "Essence and Resilience" (14th Edition of the Dak'Art Biennale), "Un.e Air.e de famille" (Paul Eluard Museum, Paris), "Reclaiming and Making: Art, Desire, Violence" (Museum of Sex New York), "Flowers" (Sakhile&Me, Frankfurt), "One Thousand Voices" (Zeitz MOCAA, Cape Town), "Material Insanity" (MACAAL, Marrakech), "One Thousand Voices" (MADRE, Naples), "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

2024

Speaker and guest of honour at 'Duvangu,' an international artist residency in Libreville, Gabon, organised by Manifesto. This initiative is supported by the French Embassy in Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe, the French Institute in Gabon, the Ministry of Culture and the Arts, and UNESCO.

2022–2023

Artistic direction of "Ozangé, the first Biennale of African Photography in Spain", Málaga, Spain.

"Owanto, an Intimate Exhibition" Bonhams, Paris, France.

Nominator for the James Barnor Award. The award was given to Owanto's nominee, Mario Macilau.

2021

Collaboration with the non-profit organisation LALELA in the design of a scarf based on the artwork "Be a Woman" for charitable purposes.

2020

"Flowers" Sakhile&Me Gallery, Frankfurt, Germany.

Mbokodo Award 2020: Owanto receives a recognition for "the incredible work she does to eradicate female genital mutilation by shining the spotlight on it and unearthing the ways we can unmask the perpetrators through art is crucial at this time. Her work extends beyond the art as she is a campaigner and active voice against the practice".

2019

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

"One Thousand Voices" Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina (MADRE), Naples, Italy. Organised 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 and Oceanographic Museum of Monaco with the support of Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, 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

2025

“Flowers Forever”, Bucarius Kunst Forum, Hamburg, Germany.

“Flowers Forever”, Chiostro del Bramante, Rome, Italy.

2023

ARCOLisboa – Afronova Gallery.

“Flowers Forever”, Kunsthalle München, Munich, Germany.

2022

“Rock My Soul II”, celebrated in Stockholm and curated by Sir Isaac Julien and Eva Livijn.

“Essence and Resilience”, 14th Edition of the Dak’Art Biennale, Dakar, Senegal.

“Unveiling of the Contemporary African Art Collection”, The Africa Centre London, England.

2021

“Reclaiming and Making: Art, Desire, Violence”, Museum of Sex (MoSEX), New York, United States Curated by Emily Shoyer.

”Un.e Air.e de famille”, Paul Eluard Museum, Paris, France.

“Only Photos”, Reiners Contemporary Art Gallery, Marbella, Spain.

Investec Cape Town Art Fair Digital Event – Sakhile&Me Gallery.

Photo London – Sakhille&Me Gallery.

ART X Lagos, Nigeria – Sakhille&Me Gallery.

Cologne Fine Art & Design fair: HOME EDITION, Cologne, Germany – Sakhille&Me Gallery.

2020

“Home Museum”, LagosPhoto20, Lagos, Nigeria.

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. Organised 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 21ième 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

Vilsmeier – Linhares Private Collection, Germany.

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

The Africa Centre London, England.

Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain.

Accademia di Brera, Italy.

Luciano Benetton Collection, Italy.

Fundació Fran Daurel, Spain.