



BEAUX RÊVES SWEET DREAMS

Sep 6 - Sep 11, 2022
Parcours des Mondes

Galerie Arnaud Lefebvre
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#DuendeArtProjects

#SweetDreams2022

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For its first participation to Parcours des Mondes, Duende Art Projects presents the curated exhibition *Beaux Rêves – Sweet Dreams*, highlighting a stunning group of 19th century Southern African headrests in juxtaposition with colorful abstract paintings from three contemporary female Ndebele artists. The title of the show is self-explanatory. As we share a passion for art and a desire to create homes filled with beauty, who doesn't sometimes dream about the acquisition of a certain work of art? The selection of this exhibition wishes to be the subject of the sweet dreams of its visitors, while presenting headrests that once accompanied the dreams of their owners.



In alignment with Duende Art Projects' ambition to bring classical and contemporary art from the African continent together in an engaging way, multiple correspondences can be discovered between the antique South African headrests and the modern Ndebele paintings. Originally painted on houses, it is no surprise the compositions of these paintings are most architectural. Headrests as well have a structural composition, the base and head support connected through complex design elements. The brilliant use of negative space in both art types also plays an important supporting role. Just as the play with symmetry and asymmetry around the central axis creates surprising configurations. While Ndebele painting was passed on from mother to daughter, the headrests are similarly strongly feminine in conception. Both the painters, as the anonymous sculptors, show us which creative heights African artists were able reach within the limitations of a certain style or type of object.

For generations Southern African Ndebele women have created an art of remarkable richness and vitality. In large murals that covered the exterior walls of their houses, they created designs that are at once ancient and modern in their minimalism, bright colors, and bold abstract patterns. These unique geometric motifs, with their schematic color arrangements in angular areas outlined in black, marked their Ndebele identity. Under the impulse of the late Belgian art dealer Alain Guisson, three artists transferred the ephemeral Ndebele mural paintings from walls to paper, thereby promoting and preserving the art form for posterity. At the time it was a very new way for Ndebele women to assert their identity, each of them pursuing their own aesthetic path. *Beaux Rêves – Sweet Dreams* shows seven beautiful works from the artists Franzina Ndimande, her daughter Angelina Ndimande, and Anna Mahlangu.

The Ndebele paintings are presented together with a group of 19th century Southern African headrests. Carefully selected for their age, quality, and design, they are among the best of their type. These wooden pillows elevated their owner's head from the ground to protect an intricate hairstyle from dust and being flattened when asleep. The headrests from the Tsonga are famed for their astonishing craftsmanship and inventiveness. Specialist artists created a harmonious symmetry around a central axis. The endless creativity in the design concepts of their headrests is shown by three superb examples. Nine other headrests, characterized by a play between triangles and circles, originate from Zimbabwe's Shona people. The female pubic area and typical scarification patterns are prominently and consistently represented in these headrests, visually acknowledging the importance of women in a male dominated society. Lastly, an early Swazi headrest acquired in the 1870s creates a timeless image evocative of a bull.

On the current momentum in African art:

African art today is getting the recognition and appreciation it deserves. Art collectors are pushing the market to new heights. This is partly due to a large number of exhibitions and art fairs dedicated to African art in 2022. The two artists Sonia Boyce (UK) and Simone Leigh (US) became the first black women to represent their countries and to win a Golden Lion at this year's



Venice Biennale. Two pavilions received special recognition: France with Algerian artist Zineb Sedira and Uganda for its first-ever participation in the event, with works by Acaye Kerunen and Collin Sekajugo. The latest show by South African artist Marlene Dumas at the François Pinault Venice Foundation is outstanding. And MOMA New York presented a solo exhibition by Frédéric Bruly Bouabré, only the second exhibition in the museum dedicated to an African artist. The famous Biennale of African Art was held in Dakar until 21 June.

Duende Art Projects' mission is to help address the lack of diversity on the international art market, as contemporary African art has been repeatedly underrepresented and misrepresented. In the last few decades, the African continent has become an exciting art scene with strong artists who are now exhibited worldwide. The global art world is finally making them part of it, while at the same time amplifying the voices of African artists.

About Duende Art Projects:

Duende Art Projects' ambition is to inspire people and enrich their lives by sharing our profound passion for the art of the African continent. Our purpose is to strengthen Africa's visibility and significance within the global and diverse art world through a strong digital presence and curated exhibitions on unique locations.

Duende is a Spanish word that is difficult to translate; it is a concept related to flamenco, referring to a magical moment of inspiration and genius. It is the heightened state of emotion when encountering a moving work of art, a sudden experience that can't be captured, a moment of goosebumps. While Spanish in origin, the word has an African ring to it - indeed it is a universal concept, and indicative of the gallery's ambitions. Duende Art Projects goes beyond labels and reveals the art's multiplicity of layers.

The gallery wants to open up the western-dominated perspective in the art world, and offers a well-rounded and fresh take on African art, both classical and contemporary. Establishing strategic collaborations with other galleries and institutions worldwide, it wishes to create opportunities to support and promote art and artists from the African continent. The gallery strives to advance the careers of the artists it exhibits and strengthen their international exposure. Our mission is to connect people — the curious and interested, aspiring and seasoned collectors, connoisseurs, emerging and renowned artists, art advisors, curators and writers — with art from the African continent and its diaspora. We facilitate easy access through compelling exhibitions — offline and online, in Antwerp and on location. Our online platform provides insightful educational content and wishes to be a home for ideas, news and stories. We offer a bespoke and discrete art advisory service that covers all aspects of building and managing a collection. Duende Art Projects was founded in 2021 by Bruno Claessens, a passionate art expert with 15 years of ample experience in the African art market. Previously, he was the European director of the African art department at Christie's for 5 years. Bruno has published three books on African



art (Ere Ibeji (2013), Baule Monkeys (2016) & UNÔ (2021)) and has ran a popular blog on the subject since 2013. Throughout his career, he gained a profound knowledge of art of the African continent, both classical and contemporary, and has developed a great network of collectors, curators and scholars as well as strong institutional ties.

PRESS IMAGES

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SWEET DREAMS HEADREST
ANONYMOUS TSONGA ARTIST
SOUTH AFRICA

Wood, 216 g
12 x 17 x 5 cm
4 3/4 x 6 3/4 x 2 in

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THE BULL HEADREST
ANONYMOUS NGUNI ARTIST
SOUTH AFRICA

Wood, 1375 g
15 x 42 x 10 cm
5 7/8 x 16 1/2 x 4 in

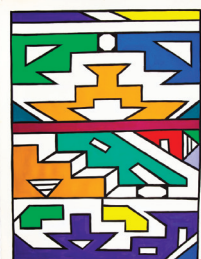
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SIX CIRCLES HEADREST
ANONYMOUS SHONA ARTIST
ZIMBABWE

Wood, beads 270 g
17 x 19 x 6 cm
6 3/4 x 7 1/2 x 2 3/8 in

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ANGELINA NDI MANDE
"UNTITLED" (1993)
MABHOKO, SOUTH AFRICA

Acrylic paint on paper
76 x 56 cm
29 7/8 x 22 in

Copyright: Duende Art Projects



FRANZINA NDI MANDE
"UNTITLED" (1993)
MABHOKO, SOUTH AFRICA

Acrylic paint on paper
56 x 76 cm
22 x 29 7/8 in

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