



Ange-Frédéric Koffi, *Drift*, 2022, ink-jet print, 47 1/4 × 31 1/2".

Ange-Frédéric Koffi

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“*Territoire des perceptions, Sérénade des formes*” (Territory of Perceptions, Serenade of Forms) was a *Gesamtkunstwerk* that could only have been conceived by a *plasticien*—the English word *artist* does not quite capture the totality of Ange-Frédéric Koffi’s practice. Usually read as a photographer—with a recent nod in “Foam Talent 2022,” an exhibition in Amsterdam that showcased photographers who “push forward the medium of photography”—Koffi trained as a designer, artist, and curator at various art schools in Europe. His practice is not only about the images he takes, but about creating the environment and the experience around those images. True to the French sense of *plasticien*—an artist in the widest sense—Koffi is concerned with the materiality of the pictures and the way they are shown, as well as their subject matter.

Since 2015, Koffi has been making a photographic series titled “*Le grand voyage*” that explores ideas of movement through images taken on the road in parts of West Africa. Iterations of the

series have been shown widely, including at Les Rencontres de Bamako—Biennale Africaine de la Photographie (The Bamako Encounters—African Biennale of Photography), an exhibition of contemporary African photographers in Mali. While some of the images in this series were included here, in the artist's first exhibition in his home country of Côte d'Ivoire, this inaugural occasion felt even more like a homecoming after a *grand voyage* than one might have expected—a homecoming not just for the artist, but also for his ideas. Completely engulfing the project space of Galerie Cecile Fakhoury, the exhibition started with a panel of three tempered and enameled bronze-glass mirrors on the exterior walls of the gallery, immediately reminding viewers of themselves as potential elements in the exhibition they are about to enter, a theme that runs throughout Koffi's practice.

The exhibition was dominated by the color orange, which in the Côte d'Ivoire flag represents both the savannas in the north of the country and the fertility of the land. Koffi was born in the north, in Korhogo, in 1996. The wallpaper patterns, carpet, and other objects in the show are easily recognizable from Ivorian architecture. Draped with orange curtains always slightly open for one to get into the exhibition, the entrance was a deceptively simple invitation into a myriad of complex ideas. At one end of the space were two of the artist's own suitcases, stamped with tags from his travels; one was open, showing African masks covered in tissue paper—a gesture that evokes current discussion around the restitution of stolen artefacts. “*Territoire des perceptions, Sérénade des formes*” was also the title of Koffi's master's thesis at École Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne in Switzerland, where his research focused on how African art and design are shown and perceived outside their continent of origin. However, noting a dearth of regional institutional spaces, he is insistent that exhibitions in Africa must go beyond showing images, also taking into consideration the forms and contexts of their production.

This show, and Koffi's practice in general, is meta in that way. Some works, such as a silk scarf designed by the artist, were shown in their shipping containers. Photographic prints packed in Bubble Wrap lay on the floor, and images were propped up on a library shelf. *A moto, je te vois* (On a Motorcycle, I See You) and *Mercedes-Benz*, photographs taken in 2015, were printed at about the size of one's palm and shown at foot level, requiring the viewer to bend down to see them. *Drift*, 2022, captures yellow leaves and the shadows around them in a beautiful soft light, the image blurred as if taken while in motion. The work is not so much the photograph as it is the affect that it creates and that the artist attempts, with the total installation, to capture. “*Territoire des perceptions, Sérénade des formes*” was a poetic provocation, a playground of ideas on photography and artistic production.

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