

ARTS

This Gallery Championing African Contemporary Art Will Participate In The First Parisian Edition Of Art Basel

Y-Jean Mun-Delsalle Contributor 

I write about luxury, art and culture.

Follow

Oct 7, 2022, 07:18pm EDT

0 

Having opened its doors in 2012 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Galerie Cécile Fakhoury today also boasts spaces in Dakar, Senegal, and Paris, France. Promoting contemporary art on the African continent, it offers visibility to the creativity and diversity of contemporary art in Africa not only through its program of solo and group exhibitions, but also through its participation in international fairs and biennials and collaborations with other galleries. I sit down with its founder, Cécile Fakhoury, to find out more about its participation in the inaugural edition of [Paris+ by Art Basel](#), the world's leading art fair, which will take place in the French capital at the Grand Palais Éphémère from October 20 to 23, 2022.



Roméo Mivekannin, *Odalisque*, d'après Benjamin Constant, 2022, pigments, acrylic and elixir baths on ... [+] PHOTO GRÉGORIE COPITET. COURTESY OF GALERIE CÉCILE FAKHOURY (ABIDJAN, DAKAR, PARIS)

What were your thoughts when you heard that Paris+ by Art Basel would replace the FIAC?

Beyond the surprise provoked by this announcement – although we could already feel things changing for a few months – and the influence games behind it, on which everyone can have an opinion, the important thing that appeared to me was the return, or at least the confirmation of the return, of the city of Paris as a major capital of international contemporary art. While Paris has always been an attractive city, it had not been as dynamic in recent years on an international level. Along with other factors, the creation of a Parisian edition of Art Basel seemed to me above all to be a sign of the city's renewed influence on the contemporary art sector, and this is very good news because I had already made this commitment when I chose to open our third exhibition space in Paris at 29 Avenue Matignon in October 2021, on the occasion of what was to be the last edition of the FIAC. Given the prestige and quality of the Art Basel group, this news promised some interesting reconfigurations and openings to follow closely.

What will Paris+ be keeping or doing differently from the FIAC?

In the footsteps of the FIAC, I believe that Paris+ by Art Basel is committed to defending the French and Parisian particularity within the contemporary art world, while seeking to go beyond the work undertaken by the FIAC, by pushing its international influence even further. In parallel with this international resonance specific to Art Basel, the recently announced selection of galleries testifies to a real approach to local anchoring, with a national art scene that is valued, in a dynamic of emulation between the local and the global that seems to be relevant. Newness usually implies an attitude of overcoming because there is nothing yet to rely on, and therefore it generates new and interesting dynamics.



Roméo Mivekannin, Jean-Léon Gérôme, 2022, pigments, acrylic and elixir baths on free canvas, 247 x ... [+] PHOTO GRÉGORIE COPITET. COURTESY OF GALERIE CÉCILE FAKHOURY (ABIDJAN, DAKAR, PARIS)

Why did your gallery decide to exhibit at Paris+?

Galerie Cécile Fakhoury had already been participating in the FIAC since 2019, and this fair was an important annual event for us, as it accompanied our approach of not only being considered as a contemporary art gallery based in Africa, but as an international contemporary art gallery above all. Moreover, in 2019 we were only two galleries established on the African continent represented at the FIAC, and our presence therefore seemed relevant. With Paris+, the same logic is at the origin of our desire to participate, with the added honor of being part of history in motion, in the process of being written. We are very happy to be part of this first edition of Paris+ by Art Basel, and our physical presence in Paris since October 2021 seems to reinforce the relevance of our participation.

What is the expected impact or role that Paris+ will have on the Parisian art scene?

Paris+ confirms and reinforces the influence of Paris within the international contemporary art scene. We can consider it as another signal because this dynamic has been underway for several years, with the installation of several major galleries in the capital, and a more general dynamism of the cultural offer (museums, foundations, art centers...). The Parisian art scene will therefore not be influenced solely by Paris+, but the creation of this fair undeniably reinforces the ascendancy of Paris as an international capital of contemporary art.

Who are your collectors?

For us, our very loyal collectors have quite diverse profiles: they can be young or less young but with the same real passion. I am very glad to say that our biggest collectors are on the African continent, private collectors or corporate collections. We see on the continent more and more structuring around this idea of collecting.

What categories or themes of modern or contemporary art have you noticed that are attracting the most interest from collectors lately?

We are specialized, in a way, in contemporary African art and we observe a growing interest in this creation whether on the continent and internationally, from the private sector but also from public structures. It is very encouraging to see how much the art emanating from the continent today touches a large public.

Who are the three most interesting modern or contemporary artists at Paris+ to collect today?

I am going to preach for my parish. We will present an excellent Beninese artist, Roméo Mivekannin, in a solo show at Paris+ and also a monumental outdoor installation in the Tuileries Garden. I do not yet know the artists presented at the fair, but I can cite a gallery that also presents some African artists such as In Situ gallery based in Romainville, which works with Otobong Nkanga, a Nigerian artist based in Belgium whose work is incredibly deep, or Meschac Gaba, a Beninese artist based in Cotonou who offers a very strong and relevant reading of the world.