

THE ILLUMINATED AFRICA

‘Lumières d’Afrique’ challenged one artist from each of the fifty-four countries in Africa to present an original work.

As a prelude to COP21 in Paris (also known as the 2015 Paris Climate Conference), the African Artists for Development endowment fund has organised the exhibition ‘Lumières d’Afrique’, which opened to the public for the first time on 4 November, 2015. The exhibition title, meaning ‘Lights of Africa,’ points toward the continent’s need for access to sustainable energy, as well as the current illumination of art from the continent and the efficacy of African art as a means to realise these goals, both internally and externally. As Gervanne Leridon (co-president of AAD) points out: “The sensory prism through which artists offer us a glimpse of the world is very different from the technological, economic and scientific vision that tends to dominate discussions... I am convinced that Africa’s artistic scope is not sufficiently appreciated.”

Under the guidance of Artistic Director Jean-Michel Champault, ‘Lumières d’Afrique’ challenged one artist from each of the fifty-four countries in Africa to present an original piece, channeling their individual concerns through the umbrella theme, ‘The Illuminated Africa.’ This exhibition marks the first of its kind to include artwork

from each of the fifty-four African countries. Among the fifty-four artists are Aïda Muluneh (Ethiopia), Athi-Patra Ruga (South Africa), Emeka Okereke (Nigeria), Abdoulaye Konaté (Mali), Paa Joe (Ghana), Gonçalo Mabunda (Mozambique), Nathalie Mba Bikoro (Gabon) and Cyrus Nganga Kabiru (Kenya).

The exhibition is also unique in that for the first time in world history, all fifty-four African artists have agreed to create a collaborative video piece (projected as part of the exhibition), contributing insights into their creative and investigative processes.

In December, following the exhibition at the Théâtre National de Chaillot, the works will be shown at the Gare du Nord (Paris) during COP21 and then in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), with the support of the African Development Bank, during the first quarter of 2016. The exhibition will then go on tour in Africa, Europe and the United States.

‘Lumières d’Afrique’ ran at the Théâtre National de Chaillot from 4-24 November. The exhibition will be open at the Gare du Nord in Paris for the month of December, 2015.



01 - 02 Paa Joe (Ghana), *Electric Bulb*, 2015. Wood sculpture, 230 x 110 x 120cm.
 03 Athi-Patra Ruga (South Africa), *Miss Azania*, 2014. Printed on Hahnemühle photorag baryta, 80 x 120cm.
 04 Aïda Muluneh (Ethiopia), *Darkness Give Way to Light (Chelema le berhane botawen seelek)*, 2015. Printed on Hahnemühle photorag baryta, 120 x 120cm.
 05 Emeka Okereke (Nigeria), *Light Switch*, 2015. Printed on Canson rag photographic, 40 x 60cm. All images courtesy of Lumières and the various artists.