

2023 Annual Report

Feminist Foundation for African Contemporary Art

Contents

Sommaire

Introduction 3

Exhibitions 4

Art Fairs 10

Collaborators 12

Publications 13

Events 14

Associations 15

Contacts 17

Introduction

The Feminist Foundation for African Contemporary Art (FFACA, aka Fondation Feministe pour l' Art Contemporain Africain) was established on 23 March 2023.

As its establishment was a long process lasting almost a year, this annual report covers the calendar year 2023 from 1st January to 31 December 2023.

As per its Statutes, the central goal of the Foundation is the promotion and support of women contemporary artists of African heritage, recognizing that women artists, and particularly women artists of colour, have historically been underrepresented in both private and public collections.

Furthermore, the Foundation wishes to promote contemporary African art as a valuable and creative form of artistic expression, and to override restrictive and outdated colonial notions around African-related issues.

The Foundation implements its objectives mainly through the organization of temporary exhibitions at Gallery Brulhart, Rue des Vollandes 21, 1207, Geneva, which is also its office and administrative premises.

The exhibitions of 2023 are presented under the “Exhibitions” section of this report. For the first time in 2023, we also participated in two international art fairs, the “Also Known As Africa (AKAA)” art fair in Paris (October) and to the “ST-ART Fair” in Strasbourg (November).

A printed catalogue of the Gallery Brulhart permanent collection was published, to promote both current and past exhibitions and artworks. The website www.gallerybrulhart.ch also presents current and past exhibitions, including the artworks and biographies of each of the artists.

To root the gallery in the local art scene, the local feminist community, and the African diaspora community, a number of partnerships maintained including with “Noircir Wikipedia”, “Phenomenal Women Global”, and “Un Soir aux Eaux-Vives”, the association to organize open gallery nights in the Eaux Vives neighbourhood.

Sadly, our partnership with “Couleurs des Femmes”, a Geneva-based association with which we held several creative workshops to feminist themes, took an abrupt end in October with the demise of its founder, Sylvie Rieder.

Exhibitions

Regarde-Moi (19 January – 11 March 2023)

This group exhibition grew out of Brulhart's visit to the Dakar Biennale in 2022. It was devised by Olaréwadjou Elvis Lalèyè, a Beninese art curator based in Dakar.

REGARDE-MOI is a dive into the worlds of four women artists from Senegal, Benin and the Democratic Republic of Congo, united around a common project: to offer us an unvarnished look at African women, feminism and women's movements in the African context.

Nicknamed the African Picasso, Kiné Aw's paintings are a reminder of the invaluable role that women have played in the development of the African continent since ancient Egypt. A role that she continues to play on a daily basis, setting order to disorder.

Amy Celestina combines acrylic paint, collage and sewing to question the evolution of human beings over time. At the dawn of information and communication technologies, can we say that humanity has made leaps forward or that it has regressed in equal measure for women and men?



Exhibitions

Regarde-Moi (19 January – 11 March 2023)

By fixing half-naked women with masks in their arms for posterity, Anastasie Langu Lawinner's black and white photographs break the established rules by questioning the image of the black female body with the aim of freeing it from the gaze of society and stereotyped canons of beauty.



In her paintings, Mauricette Djengue talks about how important it is for today's African woman to be educated and to continue to cultivate herself so as to put an end to differences in status. She also talks about the social pressure that black women are under to get married instead of developing and achieving their full potential.



The exhibition was accompanied by two discussions on African feminisms, one in person with Kiné Aw and Mauricette Djengue at the opening, and a second with Amy Celestina, Anastasie Langu, and activist Mafoya Glele Kakai by videoconference on 8 March 2023.



A creative workshop entitled "The woman I am, the woman I want to be" with the association Couleurs des Femmes was also organised.



Exhibitions

She That Spreads the Winds (13 April – 20 May 2023)

The duo exhibition brought together the German-Egyptian sculptor Dr Gindi, and the Ugandan multi-disciplinary artist Sheila Nakitende, who presented tapestries made from bark cloth paper.

The exhibition was named after one of Dr Gindi's sculptures, a small bronze depicting a twisting figure seemingly caught in a vortex of swirling winds. In Dr Gindi's work, the invisible forces of human feeling and meditation are forged through fire into abstracted human forms. As if the artist would break down the human psyche, casting it through wax and rebuilding it as filigree, but sturdy bronze.

Surrounding the bronze silhouettes, Sheila Nakitende's works trembled in whispering, featherlight tapestries. The artist focusses on womanhood experiences that include nurturing, preserving our aesthetics, material culture and history. The meditative process of harvesting the bark and reshaping it into fleece, weaving emotion and air into her pieces as she goes, echoes Dr Gindi's process of examining and dismantling emotion and materials in order to capture their form, and was what brought these two artists together in an incarnation of human resilience, and transcendence.

In a related event, Gallery Brulhart welcomed the Geneva Writers Group for a poetry workshop inspired by the artwork of the exhibition.



Exhibitions

Keep Out of Reach of Children (1 June – 15 July 2023)

In this exhibition, the South African visual artist and researcher Philiswa Lila has created an art installation comprising of paintings, bead works, found objects and performance. All elements represent personal and collective experiences in the places, spaces and people considered safe, unsafe and/or dangerous. Lila draws from personal memories of childhood by creating a body of work that looks at lessons of safety, exploring the complexities of safety in physical, emotional and psychological situations. Safety is not just a part of being born a girl; it requires young girls to be vigilant and modify their behaviours based on the terms and conditions on how to live as women and remain safe, be safe, stay safe, keep safe, be careful, take care, etc. are lessons that never guarantee safety. Only fear.



In this work, Lila offers perspectives on gender violence, love, and menstruation by engaging issues of pain, shared pain and paths of pain, vulnerability, resilience and healing. This project forms part of Lila's artist-in-residency at GendV Project: Urban Transformation and Gendered Violence in India and South Africa hosted by the University of Johannesburg and the University of Cambridge.



The opening of the exhibition coincided with the gallery open night "Un Soir aux Eaux-Vives".

Due to late visa issuance, the artist arrived the day after offered a performance to the theme of the exhibition, on Saturday, 3 June 2023.



Exhibitions

Les Tatas de la Tontine (31 August – 21 October 2023)

Les Tatas de la Tontine was the personal project of Ivorian photographer Maggy Dago, and Gallery Brulhart's first photographic exhibition.

Maggy Dago was born in Côte d'Ivoire and came to France at the age of 16. She is a photographer and feminist activist. After studying photography at the Academy of Photography in Malta in 2018, photography is now a means of expression for her, but above all of (re)valuing women.

This photographic report highlights the courageous women of the CECI association's tontine. Combating financial insecurity among women is a feminist issue. The tontine is a collective savings method that enables women to finance their personal and professional projects.

The exhibition featured around fifteen black-and-white and colour photographs, ranging from small to large in size. Two videos were also projected as part of the exhibition. The catalogue contained all 43 photographs in the series.



Exhibitions

Between the Lines (Nov – Dec 2023)

This exhibition brought together in conversation works by two Kenyan artists, Sheila Bayley and Patti Endo, to highlight common themes such as emotion, identity, and the search for self, inviting viewers to reflect on the multiple ways in which artists express and address these themes.

Patti Endo's minimalist style focuses on intricate lines and black-and-white shading to explore the complexities of the inner psyche and communicate raw emotion. In contrast, Sheila Bayley's work is characterized by vibrant color palettes and abundant, detail-rich narrative approaches to explore human psychology and questions of identity. For both artists, lines can set boundaries or offer freedom.

To mark the festive season, a Christmas drink was offered on 8 December with live Kora music played by Moumouni Diarra.



Art Fairs

AKAA – Also Known As Africa (Paris, 18 – 22 October 2023)

At our first presentation at AKAA, we decided for a duo show with artists Sheila Nakitende from Uganda (see “She Who Spreads the Winds” above) and Theresah Ankomah from Ghana who exhibited at the Gallery in November/ December 2022.



The booth attracted a lot of attention. Visitors were intrigued by Nakitende’s stunning artistry expressed in bark cloth paper tapestries that are also 100% natural and sustainable. Ankomah’s abstract, colorful cityscapes with print motives of Ghanaian baskets provided both resonance and contrast to Nakitende’s work.



Both artists were invited to take part in the event and had a chance to visit other exhibitions and events in Paris.



Art Fairs

ST-ART Fair Strasbourg (22 – 26 November 2023)

Also our first (and probably only) presentation at the ST-ART fair in Strasbourg showcased the work of Maliza Kiasuwa from the DRC/Belgium, who crafts wall sculptures from loofas and tapestries from wool (foreground). Maliza was also present at the fair.

In the background to the right we see the semi-abstract paintings of Zimbabwean artist Mavis Tauzeni, and to the left the watercolors of Kenyan artist Nadia Wamunyu.

The reception of this booth was somewhat colder in at this commercial art fair showing mainly pop art.



Publications

A significant new publication was the Gallery Brulhart Collection Catalogue, a xx-page, full-colour book showcasing the artists that have collaborated with us alongside a selection of their works.

In 2023, four standard exhibition catalogues were also published. A fifth catalogue, “Les Tatas de la Tontine”, was printed to include the entire series of photographs, in addition to those on display, in a more classic B5 book format.

Contributing writers to these catalogues include:

- Olarewadjou Elvis Laleye
- Helga Rainer
- Al Miner
- Mafoya Glele Kakai

Our social media presence grew significantly, through the combined efforts of our team.

In 2023, the @gallerybrulhart Instagram account saw its followers increase by over 100% from 581 to 1204. 60 posts were made on the account, documenting the exhibitions, events and encounters made through the gallery, which generated a combined 29,210 views in total.



Collaborators

In 2023 we began working regularly with several passionate and dedicated contractors, to elevate the quality and the impact of our exhibitions and events.



Photographer Clara Watt documents all our vernissages, events and encounters, and her work is represented throughout this report.

Regards sur « Les Tatas de la Tontine », exposition photo de la photographe féministe Maggy Dago

ARTICLE DE IRENE NGAH ET ROSIE COOK
16 mai 2023

Irene Ngah, Masters of African Studies student at the Universite de Geneve, joined us as an intern from September to December 2023. Her insights and passionate engagement were extremely valuable to the Foundation, and her attendance was crucial to the success of our booth at AKAA in November 2023. Irene co-authored a review of the Tatas de la Tontine exhibition with FFACA co-founder Rosie Cook, <https://rosiecook.com/regards-sur-les-tatas-de-la-tontine-exposition-photo-de-la-photographe-feministe-maggy-dago/>



Head of Partnership at Phenomenal Women Global Elvire Foua was also a regular contributor and supported the gallery throughout the year through her presence during visiting hours.



The deliciously talented Claudine Mwanangele of Mikate B has also become a key contributor to the success of our events, with her catering services which provide afro-fusion buffets and beverages to the great pleasure of our guests.



Events

Over the course of 2023, several cultural events were held at Gallery Brulhart:

Dialogue avec les artistes

Collage workshop La Femme que Je suis

Droits de la femme Afrique event on 8 march

Aperitif Bee Swiss

Poetry workshop

Noeuds de nous event

Aperitif de Noel



Associations

Partnering with diverse associations allows the FFACA to broaden its reach and support local programmes that align with its goals.

Noircir Wikipedia

<https://noircirwikipedia.org>

The Noircir association supports and develops anti-racist actions and runs Wikimedia training courses through the Noircir Wikipedia project, in the form of itinerant workshops. Noircir Wikipedia is a multilingual initiative that aims to fill the gap in references, articles and information about Africa and its diaspora, culture and notable personalities on Wikipedia.

Gallery Brulhart hosts and collaborates with Noircir Wikipedia animators for workshops introducing useful activities and tools for using Wikipedia and related sites. In 2023, three workshops were held at FFCAA/ Gallery Brulhart with Noircir Wikipedia, two of them in collaboration with Phenomenal Women Global.

Phenomenal Women Global

<https://www.phenomenalwomenglobal.com>

Phenomenal Women Global (PWG) is a non-profit organization based in Switzerland and Uganda whose mission is to connect, advance and empower women and girls by supporting their personal and professional development, developing their leadership skills, coaching and mentoring.

FFCAA/ Gallery Brulhart is proud to be a member of the Phenomenal Women Global network. We participated with a stand at the PWG annual conference, and PWG members are regular supporters and visitors of the gallery openings and events.

Un soir aux Eaux-Vives

<https://unsoir.ch>

The Association « Un Soir » brings together around 20 art galleries, artist studios, and other art spaces in the Eaux-Vives neighbourhood. It organizes each year in spring a gallery open night which attracts normally around 200 visitors. FFCAA/ Gallery Brulhart is participating in the event since 2022

Contacts

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