

## MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

### A TALE OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART OF AFRICA

*Edited by Jean-Yves Marin. Texts by Célestin Koffi Yao and Ousseynou Wade*

The Swiss family-owned banking group CBH Compagnie Bancaire Helvétique SA has been putting together its own art collection for more than fifteen years. Modern and contemporary African art is one of its major themes.

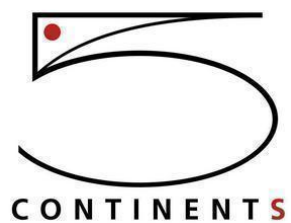
The works in this catalogue (paintings, sculptures, photographs) span about a century (1929–2025). All were created by artists who were born, or spent part of their lives, in sub-Saharan Africa. The growing success of the African artists of today undoubtedly stems from the artistic legacy of their ancestors, whose dazzling colours reflect a profoundly original worldview that addresses social and environmental themes.

Missionaries and a few colonial administrators with an eye for art identified a number of interesting artists in the 1920s. Although African art – in the Congo, Kenya, and South Africa in particular – developed throughout the twentieth century, recognition only came in the 1960s. The creation of art schools in the continent's major cities promoted cultural reappropriation through new types of expression based on an encounter between traditional African forms and modern aesthetic sensibilities emerging in the new conurbations. Artistic movements burgeoning at the turn of the millennium confirmed and reinforced the vitality of this art. It was a period that saw dynamic figures come to the fore on the global art scene. Contemporary artists turned their attention to the "Black Atlantic" and to the African-American communities shaped by it. Africa is now able to send its own message to the world. As a result, nearly eighty artists are represented in the "More than Meets the Eye" exhibition at the Musée Rath.

**Ousseynou Wade** is an expert in cultural policy and arts management, and an advisor at the Museum of Black Civilisations in Dakar. A former technical advisor to the Senegal Ministry of Culture, he served as secretary general of the Dakar Biennale, organising six editions and supporting African and diaspora artists. He also organised major international events. He launched the art magazine *Afrik'Arts* with a view to fostering reflection on contemporary art in Africa.

Born and educated in Caen, **Jean-Yves Marin** was initially an archaeologist. From 1986 to 2009, he directed the Musée de Normandie in Caen, and from 2009 to 2019, the Musée d'art et d'histoire de Genève (MAH). Since then, he has been a consultant in the field of museum management and cultural heritage, as well as an artistic advisor to CBH. He is an associate professor at Senghor University in Alexandria, Egypt.

**Célestin Koffi Yao**, a prominent Ivorian artist and intellectual, was born in Daloa in 1971. He has a doctorate in the arts from the Sorbonne and degrees in fine arts from Abidjan and Paris, and has developed a technique combining visual art, writing, and research. As the founder of the SANKONZAN centre in Abobo, he promotes African art and knowledge. His hybrid work investigates social fractures and cultural resilience.



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[Exhibition: Musée Rath, Geneva, 15 October – 23 November 2025](#)