

AFIKARIS GALLERY GOES BLUE FOR CAMEROONIAN ARTIST MOUSTAPHA BAIDI OUMAROU'S FIRST SOLO SHOW IN FRANCE

Presented from October 2–November 2, 2021, *Un Monde Bleu* unveils a series of a dozen new paintings, bearing witness to Moustapha Baidi Oumarou's interpretative use of the color blue as the artist calls out a message of peace and harmony.

October 2–November 2, 2021



Left: Moustapha Baidi Oumarou, *Le trône invisible*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 120 cm. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery. Right: Moustapha Baidi Oumarou, *Cliché idéal*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 300 cm. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

September 20, 2021 (Paris, France) – Having brought to light the works of Cameroonian artists Jean David Nkot (*Human@Condition*, May 29–July 7, 2021) and Ajarb Bernard Ategwa (*Kwata Saloon*, August 28–September 28, 2021), AFIKARIS Gallery unveils its third solo exhibition, a showcase of a dozen new works by emerging artist Moustapha Baidi Oumarou (b. 1997, Maroua, Cameroon). On view from October 2–November 2, 2021, *Un Monde Bleu* puts in perspective and revisits the use of the color blue in art, as the artist subtly addresses ongoing sociological and political issues, all-the-while conveying a sense of peace and harmony.

For “*humanist painter*” Moustapha Baidi Oumarou, blue evokes a dreamed, ideal world, in which the color, most often associated with peace, grows enshrined with a healing virtue. Eager to confer a defined purpose to his oeuvre – that of bringing people joy, inviting them to focus on the positive aspects of life – blue is the main support in his work. Mirroring the humanist approach that characterizes his overall artistic language, Baidi Oumarou communicates a message of joy, harmony, solidarity – and peace. The scenes of daily life that adorn his canvases, moments of calm in which his characters appear to be at a standstill, draw attention to the essence that brings them together, shining a light on notions of family, friendship, and togetherness. The flat, outlined, and monochrome surfaces turn away from any form of ornamentation, instead pointing to a simple, pure feeling that brings the seemingly distinct shapes harmoniously together.

Cliché idéal (2021) is the embodiment of this harmony. In this quiet family moment, the characters gather at the center of the canvas. Around them, a deep blue inundates the environment seemingly enclaving the group, yet perceptibly enveloping it instead. The characters, all but disturbed by their surroundings, turn peacefully to the viewer, as a feeling of warmth and togetherness slowly emanates from them. Revisiting a long tradition of family portraits, one embellished by representations of wealth, Baidi Oumarou's stroke is definite, pure, as he turns the

focus on the essence of his characters – the bonds that tie them together – rather than on their wealth. Stripped of their superfluous belongings, they exert a holistic sense of plenitude, one that extends beyond materiality.

More than an enduring message, *Un Monde Bleu* is thought as a nod to the health situation the world has experienced and continues to experience since 2020. Wrapping AFIKARIS's 130-m² space in this very color blue, the exhibition space becomes a haven of peace, extending a reflection on our way of approaching others, one that has been significantly altered by the pandemic. With social distancing measures and the obligation to wear a mask still enduring, a widespread sense of fear, distrust in some cases, has been generated, thereby redefining social interactions. Particularly sensitive to these collateral effects, the artist subtly points to the inequalities emerging from the wide range of government responses to the pandemic, throughout Africa and on other continents, where restrictions, and the resulting seclusion, have proved tougher.

Circumstantial, common snapshots of life, his canvases do not only look back to a lost distanced past, rather carrying a message of hope that togetherness will follow from this passing moment of isolation. Through his faceless characters, anonymized yet universally recognizable, differences are erased: the markers of physical and social barriers are taken down, leaving space for individuals to emerge. An unsaid homage to the children in his city's poorest neighborhoods, his art is an ode to people's deep desire, and ability, to once again live in harmony. Aptly expressing these themes in *Ma bicyclette blanche 1* (2021), Baidi Oumarou skillfully translates a sense of movement from a character that appears to stand still. In doing so, he instigates a notion of progress, of improvement, the potential and ability to move towards a better future.



Moustapha Baidi Oumarou, *Ma bicyclette blanche 1*, 2021. Acrylic on canvas, 140 x 130 cm. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

Ultimately, *Un Monde Bleu* is not only the artist's, but also his viewer's, dreamed world – an ideal, shared universe where people forget their differences and live in harmony and peace.

In parallel to the exhibition, the work of Moustapha Baidi Oumarou will be showcased at the 1-54 contemporary African art fair in London, on view from October 12–17, 2021.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Moustapha Baidi Oumarou:

Moustapha Baidi Oumarou (b. 1997, Maroua, Cameroon) is a multidisciplinary artist who works and lives in Maroua. A self-taught artist, Moustapha Baidi Oumarou describes himself as a “conscious and humanist painter.” This humanism shows through his paintings and drawings, in an attempt to relay what the forgotten and most vulnerable cannot express with words.

Most often laying out monochrome backgrounds and human shapes adorned with flowers, his colorful canvases, made in acrylic, translate the good within each of us. Naturally, his delicate and subtle outlines, immersed in a lush nature, evoke a moment of sharing, conviviality, or even introspection. By anonymizing his characters, his nameless yet deeply human shapes suggest a universal message of peace and humanity.



Moustapha Baidi Oumarou's work has been featured in numerous international fairs such as Art Paris (Paris); 1-54 London (London); Investec Cape Town (Cape Town); and AKAA (Paris). *Un Monde Bleu*, presented at AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, from October 2– November 2, 2021, is the artist's first solo exhibition in France.

About AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris:

Founded in 2018 by Florian Azzopardi, AFIKARIS Gallery started as an online platform and showroom specialized in the work of both emerging and established artists from African and its diaspora, before opening a dedicated Paris-based gallery space in 2021. Engaged in promoting cross cultural and disciplinary exchange, AFIKARIS acts as a platform for artists to engage with the wider public. A mirror onto and space for reflection on the contemporary African art scene, it provides artists with a space to address the topical local and international issues at the heart of their art.

AFIKARIS's curated program includes group and solo exhibitions; art fairs; publications; as well as institutional partnerships.

Un Monde Bleu | October 2–November 2, 2021

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Current and upcoming presentations:

Group show: Moustapha Baidi Oumarou, Salifou Lindou, Omar Mahfoudi, Nana Yaw Oduro
1-54 London | Somerset House, London
October 14–17, 2021

Group show: Jean David Nkot, Cristiano Mangovo, Ousmane Niang, Marc Posso
AKAA Paris | Carreau du Temple, Paris
November 12–14, 2021

Humano e A Natureza | A solo exhibition of Cristiano Mangovo
AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris
November 6–December 5, 2021