

AFIKARIS GALLERY OPENS A NEW PARIS SPACE AND PRESENTS FIRST MAJOR SOLO SHOW IN FRANCE OF CAMEROONIAN ARTIST JEAN DAVID NKOT

Inaugurating its very first gallery space, Paris-based AFIKARIS Gallery presents rising Cameroonian artist Jean David Nkot's first extensive solo exhibition in France. On view from May 29–July 7, 2021, *Human@Condition* portrays the individuals behind Africa's pervasive mining industry, pursuing the artist's ongoing exploration of the human condition and notions of resilience.

May 29 – July 7, 2021



Image credit. Jean David Nkot, ##@tiredbody##, 2021. Acrylic, posca, collage and silkscreen printing on canvas, 200 x 300 cm. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

April XX, 2021 (Paris, France) – Marking its move from an online platform and showroom to its very first physical gallery space in Paris, **AFIKARIS Gallery**, dedicated to promoting emerging and established artists from Africa and its diaspora, presents *Human@Condition*, the first major solo exhibition in France of rising Cameroonian artist Jean David Nkot (b. 1989, Douala, Cameroon). Mirroring the artist's longstanding ties with the gallery since its creation in 2018, the exhibition is also the gallery's very first solo show, featuring a newly edited monograph of Nkot's work, following on a continuous program of curated group exhibitions and off-site projects presented in its previous Paris showroom, online and at international art fairs.

On view from May 29–July 7, 2021, the all-new series – a continuation of Nkot's signature hyperrealist portraits over mapped backgrounds – will take over AFIKARIS's vast 130-square-meter space in the heart of Paris's

Marais district, with works ranging from large-scale 2 x 3-meter canvases to smaller, intimate formats. Addressing Africa's pervasive mining industry, Nkot superimposes his portraits onto a complex layering of maps, economic data and geopolitical norms, thereby focusing on the individuals at its roots. Freeing them from the weight of a *mapped* human condition often defined by hardship, he instead brings to bear an affirmed sense of resilience, and of hope.

Previously focused on the topic of migration, Nkot expands on his exploration of the human condition, examining its ties to the physical landscape through the lens of mining in Africa. Shedding light on ubiquitous systemic issues – African states' subversive dependence and control over their wealth, and the consequences on their populations – the artist brings a localized focus onto them. He traces how they materialize in the exploitation of raw materials: in particular, through the extraction of minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Continuously searching for the human dimension, he mirrors the exploitation of the soil to that of the individuals involved, bringing to the forefront their shared resilience in the face of adversity. All-the-while deploring the destruction of the natural environment, he gives way to the “*workers in the shadows*,” contrasting them with those who benefit from a pernicious industry, and ultimately honoring their strength and sense of ownership over their existence.

“I looked to the young people in my neighborhood as models for both my art and broader existence. As a witness each day of their vitality and joy, I wanted to push away common depictions of sorrow and suffering, instead shedding light on their strength and sense of hope, showing smiles and firm postures to expose a resilient body, undeterred by difficulty.” – Jean David Nkot



Image credit. Left. Jean David Nkot, www.lookofhopes.com #4, 2021. Acrylic, posca and silkscreen printing on canvas, 65 x 50 cm. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery. Right. Jean David Nkot, P.O.Box.Tarification #Cobalt #Cuivre.org, 2020. Acrylic and posca on canvas, 206 x 174 cm. Courtesy of AFIKARIS Gallery.

Attesting to Nkot's evolving technique, *Human@Condition* builds on the artist's signature play with transparency. At once pure and complex, the aesthetics and composition of his works reflect the extensive research that feeds into them, bringing to light Nkot's highly analytical practice. Creating what he calls “*maps molécules*,” or

“*molecule maps*,” he superimposes three informational planes – a broad cartography; a network of data; and, in sharp contrast with their surroundings, his human subjects.

“*The concept of maps molécules is inspired by the maps created by Thomas Hirschhorn. Like him, I circle keywords and link them together. I call them maps molécules because their structure reminds me of molecules and atoms. By creating a network of data, with information gravitating around a central word, I want to show that they are all connected, that no simple notion stands alone, and that one seemingly straightforward issue can pave the way for a broader debate. At first sight, this mass of information can seem incoherent, senseless – only to reveal the hidden complexity that lies behind it.*”
– Jean David Nkot

Faces, routes, dates, quantities, prices, ores, countries and economic plans coexist, as Jean David Nkot notes, annotates, links and questions. Putting aside any geographical realism, the data adorning the cartography gains precedence over the mapped territories. As do the notions they depict, the three planes that constitute his works engage in a continuous power struggle. A provocative and striking rendering of pervasive economic and political stakes, *Human@Condition* sheds light on the systemic control over both natural and human resources. Yet, outlining the complexity of these stakes as embodied in the endless data, he mocks their very transparency: does the prevalence of this data in the works truly make it clearer – and stronger? Or does its meaning remain obscure, only to fall short of a resilient, fierce humanity?

Confronting personal stories, economic data and geopolitical norms, the paintings emerge as deeply and proudly human works. Ultimately, Nkot’s subjects arise from the paintings, affirming their resilience and ownership over an existence from which they are seemingly dispossessed.

Presented in tandem with the exhibition, AFIKARIS Gallery unveils its first artist monograph, *Human@Condition*, retracing Jean David Nkot’s career and work as “*painter of the human condition.*” The eponymous show will be on view at AFIKARIS’s Paris space from May 29–July 7, 2021.

MEDIA CONTACT:

A R T Communication + Brand Consultancy (Berlin)

Roxane Latrèche | Account Manager | roxane@annarosathomae.com

Flora Saleh | Account Executive | flora@annarosathomae.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Published on the occasion of the exhibition, *Human@Condition*, the first monograph of Jean David Nkot’s work, will be available for purchase at AFIKARIS Gallery and online at www.afikaris.com.

About Jean David Nkot:

Jean David Nkot (b. 1989, Douala, Cameroon) is a visual artist who works and lives in Douala. A graduate from the Institute of Artistic Training (IFA), Mbalmayo, Cameroon (2010), he subsequently joined the Institute of Fine Arts, Foumban, where he obtained a degree in Drawing and Painting. In 2017, he took part in the Moving Frontiers post-Master’s Degree, focused on the topic of borders, organized by the National School of Arts, Paris-Cergy, France.

Working primarily with acrylic and posca, he continuously seeks to revisit his pictorial language and often experiments with other techniques, including silkscreen printing. His highly characteristic signature style places hyperrealist portraits over complex cartographies. A “*painter of the human condition*,” his artworks expose faces submerged by inscriptions, depicting characters both reflective of and reflected upon their physical and geopolitical context. Moving away from the personal identities of his subjects, Nkot draws attention to the embodied turmoil inhabiting them – in a manner reminiscent of Zhang Dali, Francis Bacon, and Jenny Saville.

Jean David Nkot’s work has been presented in key international institutions including: Institut des Cultures d’Islam, Paris, France; SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin, Germany; Doual’art, Douala, Cameroon; National Museum



of Cameroon, Yaounde. *Human@Condition* presented at AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, from May 29—July 7, 2021, is the artist's first major 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.

Human@Condition | May 29—July 7, 2021

AFIKARIS Gallery

38 rue Quincampoix

75004 Paris, France

info@afikaris.com

www.afikaris.com