

# GÉRALDINE TOBÉ



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GÉRALDINE TOBÉ WAS BORN IN 1992 IN KINSHASA IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO WHERE SHE LIVES AND WORKS.

She graduated in painting from the Institut des Beaux-Arts in Kinshasa in 2012. Dissatisfied with her painting, which she found not original enough, she burnt her canvases. She then began to paint with the smoke from an oil lamp, linking her art to the traumas of her childhood: night, fire and spirits. Tobé works underneath the canvas hung flat, against which she places stencils and moves the flame. Then she digs, carves and marks out the traces of soot.

Accused of witchcraft as a child and subjected to a violent exorcism, her work now questions ancestral beliefs and the place of the coloniser's religion. She imbues her work with her suffering and the pain of women and the Congolese people. Her paintings deal with ethnography with a more specific focus on the church in colonial history

and ancestral spirituality. In her canvases, African masks mingle with disjointed, dancing bodies. She says that using fire and smoke enables her to link the immaterial and physical worlds.

Tobé's work attracted particular attention during the 2018 Dakar Biennial. It has also been the subject of solo exhibitions in Brussels, Kinshasa and Madagascar.

# GÉRALDINE TOBÉ

b. 1992 in Kinshasa, DRC  
She lives and works in Kinshasa, DRC



## EDUCATION

2012-2014 - State Diploma in Artistic Humanities, Academy of Fine Arts, Kinshasa, DR Congo  
2007-2012 - Student at the Academy of Fine Arts (Painting), Kinshasa, DR Congo

## SELECTED SOLO SHOWS

2024

*Quand je me place dans la fumée, c'est mon coeur qui parle (When I stand in the Smoke, my Heart speaks)*, AFIKARIS Gallery, Paris, France

*Sans visage, sur les traces des oubliés*, French Institute of Kinshasa, Kinshasa, DR Congo

2022

*Kalunga*, Laver House, Brussels, Belgium

2018

*Écrans de la fumée*, French Institute of Kinshasa, Kinshasa, DR Congo

*Sans couleur*, La teinturerie - artists' association (IS-ART Gallery), Antananarivo, Madagascar

## SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

2024

*ReThinking Collections*, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

2023

Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town, South Africa

2022

*Memory of today, Memory of the future*, African Space Art Project, travelling exhibition (Paris, Bruxelles, Cotonou, Casablanca, Kinshasa)

2021

*History's Foot note*, Marres Gallery, Maastricht, Netherlands

2020

International Biennale of Jinan, Jinan, China

*Kinshasa Chronique*, Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine (Architecture and Heritage City), Paris, France

*African Women Artists*, ART-Z Gallery, Paris, France

2019

AKAA Art fair, Paris, France

2018

Permanent exhibition, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

*La Voix de Kinshasa*, Grassi Museum, Leipzig, Germany

Exhibition as part of the Grand-Duchy's 'Luxembourg Art Prize', Pinacothèque Museum, Luxembourg

Dakar Contemporary Art Biennale (IN), Dakar, Senegal

2017

*Eblouissement*, Biennale Picha, Lubumbashi, DR Congo

2016

Contemporary art salon of Mali (Ségou' art), Segou, Mali

2015

*Music is a feature of Man*, Kampala, Uganda

*Parcours d'artistes*, Mont Saint- Guibert, Belgium

2014

*Avancer*, Yango contemporary art biennale (OFF), Kinshasa, DR Congo

#### AWARDS

2016 - First prize of the Minister of Culture and Arts of Mali, Ségou 'art, Ségou, Mali

2015 - Special prize awarded by the UN (UN Women department)



The artist in her studio

Photo credit © Jeanpy Kabongo

'I don't like labelling works. When we create, we create for others. I want to open doors and not cage the explanation of the works.'



*ROYAUME DES DAMNÉS*, 2021

Smoke on canvas

200x170 cm / 79x67 in



*ROYAUME DES DAMNÉS, 2021*  
(details)





*SANS TITRE*, 2021  
Smoke on canvas  
170x140 cm / 67x55 in



*SANS TITRE*, 2021  
(details)



*SANS TITRE*, 2021  
Smoke on canvas  
170x140 cm / 67x55 in

‘Symbolically, ancestors are represented by masks. Through the representation of masks and other ethnographic objects, I symbolise the spirit of the ancestors who are with me. We don’t see the ancestors. We’ll never see them again. But they are always present through what they have touched.’



*SANS TITRE*, 2021  
Smoke on canvas  
170x140 cm / 67x55 in





EXHIBITION VIEWS  
*Kalunga*, Laver House, Brussels, Belgium  
November 2022

Photo credit © Jean Cosyn



*SANS TITRE*, 2022  
Smoke on canvas  
130x170 cm / 51x67 in



*SANS TITRE*, 2022  
Smoke on canvas  
130x170 cm / 51x67 in





*SANS TITRE*, 2022  
Smoke on canvas  
200x160 cm / 79x63 in



*SANS TITRE*, 2022  
(details)

'I paint the faces of people who have lived in the past or are living today, particularly the elderly. It's to get a message across to my community, to the younger generation who have a different way of looking at the elderly. They are sometimes seen as witches. But they are the ones who have made us what we are.

But there's also an element of imagination. I'm more interested in the idea of chance. A lot of things happen by chance in our lives. So I give myself the freedom to choose the faces by chance.'



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ, 2022*

Smoke on canvas

130x170 cm / 51x67 in



EXHIBITION VIEW

*Kalunga*, Laver House, Brussels, Belgium  
November 2022

Photo credit © Jean Cosyn



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ, 2022*

Smoke on canvas

130x170 cm / 51x67 in



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ, 2022*  
(details)

'It's all vanity. One day we'll fly away. It's not the body that's going to fly away but the being inside. You get rid of it. I'm passing on a message: before you fly away, if you think you can do something for someone else, do it. You'll continue to live on through the memories people have of you.'



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ*, 2022  
Smoke on canvas  
170x130 cm / 67x51 in





*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ*, 2022  
(detail 2)



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ*, 2022  
Smoke on canvas  
170x130 cm / 67x51 in



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ*, 2022  
(detail)

‘Smoke is a process of destruction and re-creation. I began to understand that smoke was a tool that helped me to heal. For me, it’s a form of therapy, a way of opening up. This smoke gave me the path, the elements to exploit. Each of us has something to heal in the search for truth.’



*VANITÉ DE VANITÉ, 2022*

Smoke on canvas

170x130 cm / 67x51 in



GAUCHE  
*SANS TITRE*, 2023  
Smoke on canvas  
170x140 cm / 67x55 in



DROITE  
*LES ZOÉ*, 2023  
Smoke on canvas  
170x140 cm / 67x55 in



*DILEMNE DE NZINGA*, 2023

Smoke on canvas

140x170 cm / 55x67 in



EXHIBITION VIEW

*Sans visage, sur les traces des oubliés*, French Institute of Kinshasa, Kinshasa, DR Congo  
February 2024

Photo credit © Grody Lokumu, Precilia Sadiki





*RÊVE INTERMINABLE*, 2022

Smoke on canvas

160x200 cm / 63x79 in



EXHIBITION VIEW

*Sans visage, sur les traces des oubliés*, French Institute of Kinshasa, Kinshasa, DR Congo  
February 2024

Photo credit © Grody Lokumu, Precilia Sadiki