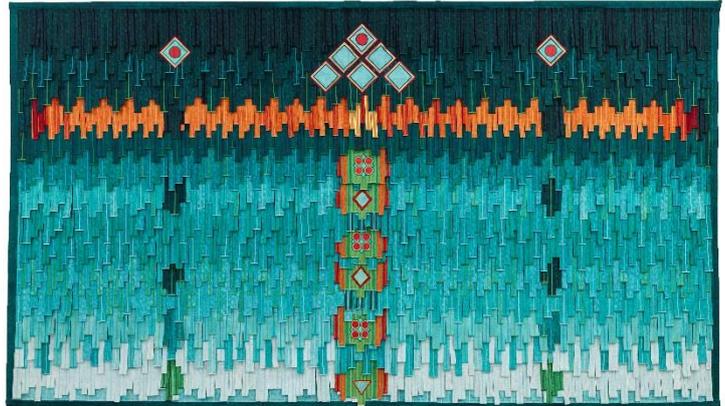


Abdoulaye Konaté

Couleurs d'âme

3 May – 15 June 2019
Blain|Southern New York

Opening Reception:
Friday 3 May, 6 – 9pm



Abdoulaye Konaté, *Vert Touareg au 3 cercles*
Courtesy of the artist and Blain|Southern

For the inaugural exhibition of its New York gallery, Blain|Southern proudly presents Abdoulaye Konaté's first solo exhibition in the United States.

In *Couleurs d'âme* (*Soul Colours*) the Malian artist approaches socio-political and environmental issues, working solely in the medium of cotton, woven and dyed using traditional West African techniques. This timely presentation introduces the artist via his most recent abstract work, presented in context alongside several landmark earlier pieces, which illustrate his shift towards abstraction over time.

Widely recognised as one of West Africa's pre-eminent contemporary artists, Konaté is known for compositions in Malian cotton that draw on the associations of this material, and balance global political and social reflections with reference to his own local, cultural history. In an early work shown here, *Lutte contre le HIV* (1995), Konaté charts the effect of the AIDS epidemic on Africa. His work at this time featured more figurative elements and were largely more conceptually based. As also seen in *L'Intolérance* (1998), these earlier instances incorporated both wall and floor based elements.

Gradually, Konaté began to produce more abstract, wall-based compositions, adopting mosaic-like patterns of iridescent colour and subtle inclusion of traditional and contemporary symbols, often referencing the local culture of the countries he was now travelling to. This can be seen in the Berber designs found in *Vert Touareg au 3 cercles* (2018) that followed an invitation to present in Morocco. This abstraction also alludes to the underlying relationship between colour gradations and musical tonalities. Finding inspiration in the striped costumes of the West African Senufo people, Konaté highlights the inseparable link between visual art and music in Malian culture, where music and decorated costumes play an integral role in the national narratives of commemoration and communication.

As a young artist with little access to paint and canvas, his choice of materials was initially driven by what was most readily available to him. The dying of cotton, Mali's principle export, is commonplace in Bamako and in this material the artist found further inspiration in its connection to local culture and how it links Mali to the rest of the globe. Konaté celebrates material, pattern and colour as an emblem of the country's long standing traditions and industries but in *Couleurs d'âme* he also aims to take specific local ideas into a realm that is more universal and spiritual.

Notes to Editors

About the artist

Born in 1953 in Diré, Mali; Konaté lives and works in Bamako, Mali. He studied painting at the Institut National des Arts in Bamako and then at the Institut Supérieur des Arts in Havana, Cuba, where he lived for seven years before returning to Mali. In 2008, Konaté was nominated for the Artes Mundi prize, Cardiff. He has received several awards, including the prestigious Leopold Sedar Senghor Prize at the Dak'Art Biennale in Dakar (1996); the Officier de l'Ordre National du Mali (2009) as well as the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de France (2002). He is the founding General Director of the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers Multimédia Balla Basseké Kouyaté in Bamako.

Selected exhibitions include; *13th Havana Biennale* (2019), *57th Venice Biennale* (2017), *Abdoulaye Konaté*, Arken Museum for Moderne Kunst, Copenhagen, DK (2016), *Useful Dreams*, Blain|Southern Berlin (2015), *Abdoulaye Konaté, The World in Textile*, Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, NL (2013), *Abdoulaye Konaté, Project Window*, Iniva, Rivington Place, London, UK (2012), *documenta 12*, Kassel (2007); *Africa Remix*, international tour including the Centre Pompidou, Paris and Hayward Gallery, London (2004-2007).

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern was founded in 2010 by Harry Blain and Graham Southern. The gallery has spaces in London, Berlin and now New York, representing a roster of contemporary artists and several artists' estates. Over the past 9 years, Blain|Southern has established a strong, artist-led exhibition programme, exhibiting new work by contemporary artists as well as, on occasion, placing focus on significant 20th Century artists or art historical movements.

In 2018 Sir Charles Saumarez Smith joined the gallery as Senior Director, having been Chief Executive at The Royal Academy of Arts, Director at The National Portrait Gallery and Director of The National Gallery London. He plays an integral part of Blain|Southern's commitment to sustaining the working life and future careers of its artists, making a priority of facilitating new commissions and public loans, as well as museum exhibitions for its artists.

Blain|Southern
547 W 25th Street
New York, NY 10001

Tuesday to Saturday: 10am - 6pm
+1 (212) 367 2095
blainsouthern.com

For further information on the exhibition,
Please contact Laura Callendar at Blain|Southern London
T: +44 (0) 20 7493 4492
M: +44 (0) 79 3904 9731
E: laura@blainsouthern.com