

## SURVEY

*Book discusses  
African art  
since 1980*

**C**ontemporary African Art Since 1980 is the first major survey of the work of contemporary African artists from diverse situations, locations, and generations who work either in or outside of Africa, but whose practices engage and occupy the social and cultural complexities of the continent since the past 30 years.

Its frame of analysis is absorbed with historical transitions: from the end of the postcolonial utopias of the 1960s during the 1980s to the geopolitical, economic, technological, and cultural shifts incited by globalisation. This book is both narrower in focus in the periods it reflects on, and specific in the ground it covers. It begins by addressing the tumultuous landscape of contemporary Africa, examining landmarks and narratives, exploring divergent systems of representation, and interrogating the ways artists have responded to change and have incorporated new aesthetic principles and artistic concepts, images and imaginaries to deal with such changes.

Organised in chronological order, the book covers all major artistic mediums: painting, sculpture, photography, film, video, installation, drawing, collage. It also covers aesthetic forms and genres, from conceptual to formalist, abstract to figurative practices. Moving between discursive and theoretical registers, the principal questions the book analyses are: what and when is contemporary African art? Who might be included in the framing of such a conceptual identity? It also addresses the question of globalisation and contemporary African art.

It periodises and cross references artistic sensibilities in order to elicit multiple conceptual relationships, as well as breaks with prevailing binaries of center and periphery, vernacular and academic, urban and non-urban forms, indigenous and diasporic models of identification. In order to theorise how these concerns have been formulated in artistic terms and their creative consequences *Contemporary African art Since 1980* examines a range of ideas, concepts and issues that have shaped the work and practice of African artists within an international and global framework.

This richly illustrated book presents examples of ambitious and important work by more than 160 African artists since the last 30 years. This list includes Georges Adéagbo, Tayo Adenaike, Ghada Amer, El Anatsui, Kader Attia, Luis Basto, Candice Breitz, Moustapha Dimé, Marlene Dumas, Victor Ekpuk, Lalla Essaydi, Samuel Fosso, Anawana Haloba, Jak Katarikawe, William Kentridge, Rachid Koraichi, Julie Mehretu, Nandipha Mntambo, Hassan Musa, Iba Ndiaye, Odili Donald Odita, Richard Onyango, Ibrahim El Salahi, Issa Samb, Chéri Samba, Yinka Shonibare, Barthélémy Togo, Obiora Udechukwu, and Sue Williamson.

Artdaily.org

## art

*Beatrice  
Spadacini  
on Rwanda's  
famous artist*

**I**t is hardly a surprise to learn that one of Pascal Bushayija's paintings hangs in the office of the country's president. His work conveys all there is to love about Rwanda: its people, coffee, music, dancing, playing *Igisoro* — a traditional game — and sharing drinks in plump gourds, a symbol of wealth.

Women are often at the core of his paintings, gently holding a peace basket in their hands or swinging their hips as they dance to the rhythm of the drum, giving life to the canvas.

The warmth that emanates from Bushayija's mixed media paintings is reassuring and welcoming. His work seeks to reframe the narrative of the country, which is still struggling to shake off the stigma of the 1994 genocide.

At the age of 52, Bushayija is Rwanda's informal art ambassador and the most established artist in the country. Dozens of young trainees swirl around him in an attempt to emulate his style and to follow in his footsteps. "I never thought I could live off my art," says Bushayija, during the interview at the Kigali Serena Hotel, surrounded by several of his colourful paintings decorating the dining area of this high-end hotel.

As a young boy growing up in Nyundo, in the western Rwanda near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bushayija's father wanted him to follow in his footsteps and become a medical doctor, a more professional and lucrative career.



## INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED

Bushayija's paintings sell for \$200-\$7,000, depending on size and whether or not they have been commissioned.

The global financial crisis has reduced the number of people who visit him in his



The artist in his studio. Pictures: Beatrice Spadacini

Rwanda's art ambassador  
drawing on peace and love

But Bushayija followed his heart and enrolled in the fine art school established by Belgian priests in the town of Giseny. After studying for six years, he became a professor and taught art in the same school for a period of 11 years. Then in 1994 all hell broke loose. Bushayija witnessed the genocide first hand and vowed to use his art as a weapon of

peace, to restore hope in his people and to heal their soul.

"My work aims to bring people back to normality. I have always liked to depict positive scenes ever since I started drawing in primary school," he says. "In my paintings I focus on themes like reconciliation, tolerance, sharing, making music together and caring for one another."

He normally starts a painting by sketching a few curved lines. "I like to stand in front of the canvas, without knowing what I intend to do, holding my pencil. A lot depends on my emotional state, on how I am feeling at the moment," he says. Some of his largest paintings have been commissioned by Bourbon coffee and are now displayed in downtown Kigali and at the international airport. His artwork will also decorate the newly opened Bourbon Coffee in Washington DC.

In 2000, while attending a workshop in France, Bushayija met Togolese artist Kossi Assous who influenced his technique and introduced him to the use of other materials, giving his paintings a tactile feel that is both alluring and penetrating.

"Thanks to Kossi, I real-

ised I could use whatever was abundant in my own environment to give depth and texture to my paintings. I now work with millet, sawdust, sand, wood bark, coffee beans and beads," he says. One of the materials he is most fond of using comes from the *Umuvuvu* tree, a plant that is abundant in Central Africa. Once glued on the canvas, the thin reddish bark provides texture as well as warmth. "Before the arrival of colonialism this material was used by Rwandan women to cover themselves," he explains.

While at the start of his career Bushayija painted landscapes, now he prefers figurative art. In recent years he has moved towards more abstract subjects, which are popular among foreigners. "My African brothers prefer to buy paintings that reflect our culture and values," he says, adding that his compatriots need to be further sensitised to art. "Rwandans are not used to hang paintings on their walls but they can learn to appreciate art by being exposed to it."

Besides being a renowned painter, Bushayija is also a musician who enjoys playing the guitar.