



LOUISIMONE
GUIRANDOU
GALLERY
PRESENTS

The Invisible City

Solo show - Obou Gbais

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A word from the Director

There are spaces we pass by without ever truly seeing them. Areas made up of twists and turns, margins, and fragments. Neighborhoods built in a rush, through improvisation, out of a sense of constant necessity. They don't appear on maps, in official narratives, or in the images we choose to show.

It is to these spaces that Obou Gbais has turned his gaze.

With *The Invisible City*, the artist shifts the focus of his practice. Known for his figures inhabited by the Dan mask, he chooses here to step back from this motif to focus his attention on the structures that surround them, shelter them, and constrain them. The city becomes a body in its own right. Dense, unstable, torn by tensions yet also pulsing with vital energy. Through his works, he focuses particularly on his neighborhood, Locodjro, but also on other urban areas of Abidjan, capturing their complexity and density.

In his compositions, nothing is frozen. Lines intersect, forms accumulate, and architectural structures seem to both hold firm and waver. What appears at first glance as a tangle gradually becomes an inhabited, organized, living space.

This work confronts us with an obvious truth: what is invisible is not absent. It is simply kept at a distance.

By revealing these territories, Obou does not seek to explain them. He proposes to make visible what often remains out of sight.

Here, looking becomes an act.

Gazelle Guirandou





The exhibition

The Invisible City

21.05 - 4.07.2026

LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery is pleased to present *The Invisible City*, the new solo show by Obou Gbais.

An Ivorian artist trained in Abidjan, Obou was first spotted by LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery during his final-year internship at the École des Beaux-Arts d'Abidjan. His visual language, already highly developed at the time, quickly asserted itself through a strong signature : the use of the Dan mask as a central motif in his compositions. Long depicted in its most pure and traditional form, the mask gradually became a space for experimentation. It humanized, came to life, revealing gazes, expressions, fragments of emotion.

Yet behind these figures, another element has always been present: the city – his city. His neighborhood.

Locodjro, with its narrow streets, precarious housing, stacked constructions, improvised and alive.

It is within this territory that the artist's personal history is deeply rooted. Forced to flee with his family during the 2002 politico-military crisis, they found refuge in Locodjro, where they eventually settled. This displacement marked an intimate turning point in Obou's life. Locodjro became a place of anchorage, of reconstruction, but also a space of observation, memory, and projection.

Since then, this neighborhood has continuously nourished his work – through its forms, its rhythms, and the dense, vibrant energy that runs through his compositions. Today, as these spaces are being weakened, transformed, and in some cases erased, this urban memory takes on an even greater urgency.

For a long time, these landscapes served as silent backdrops to the scenes unfolding in his paintings. Today, they become the subject. Obou shifts his focus – and takes a risk. That of moving away from what first defined his recognition, to explore a broader, rawer territory.

His works reveal a city we look at without truly seeing. Behind the facades of villas and modern towers in Abidjan, another reality unfolds: that of informal settlements – dense, unstable, intensely alive. A parallel city, invisible to many, yet shaped by lives, tensions, and solidarities.

Overhead views, saturated architectures, improvised electrical networks, overcrowded spaces: Obou maps these territories with an almost obsessive precision. Working on both metal and canvas, he captures the materiality of these environments – corrugated iron, concrete, traces of time – while allowing a vibrant, colorful, deeply human energy to emerge.

These structures, originally conceived as temporary, have endured over time. They tell a story of urban urgency, political transformations, and survival dynamics. They also reveal an unexpected form of beauty : that of adaptation, inventiveness, and life that insists on continuing.

In this exhibition, the figure almost disappears. The mask fades away. And yet, the human presence is everywhere.

At the windows.

Through invisible circulations.

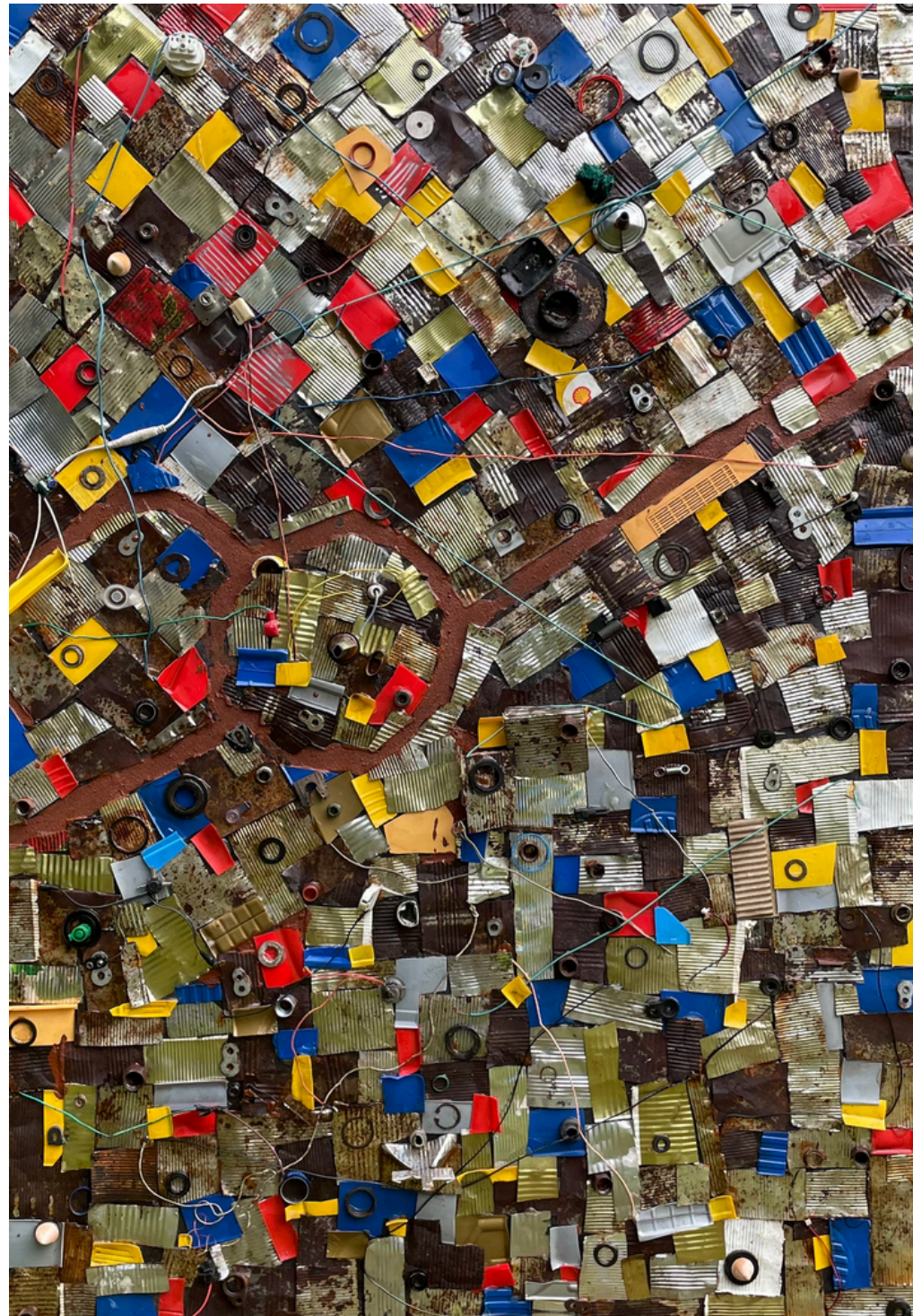
Through connections.

The Invisible City speaks as much about solitude as it does about community. It reveals fragile, threatened spaces, yet deeply structured by mutual support. Here, proximity becomes necessity, solidarity a strategy, and improvisation a form of collective intelligence. The artist does not merely depict a landscape. He reveals what escapes the eye – and compels us to look differently.

Having accompanied Obou Gbais since his student years, LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery has been a close witness to the evolution of his practice. His gaze has also been shaped by the works encountered within the Gallery: the vibrant crowds of Glover, and the dense, precarious architectures of Ndoye Douts' Medina, whose universe now resonates with Obou's representation of Locodjro. From these resonances emerges a dynamic and singular visual language.

The Gallery is pleased to open this new chapter with the artist's journey, part of a continuous collaboration built over time and renewed with every exhibition.

LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery



Yopougon Niangon Continue #1, 2026

Mixed media: cardboard, metal, and acrylic on canvas.
160 x 110 cm



Yopougon Niangon Continue #2, 2026

Mixed media: cardboard, metal, and acrylic on canvas.
160 x 110 cm



Yopougon Niangon Continue #3, 2026

Mixed media: cardboard, metal, and acrylic on canvas.
160 x 110 cm



Rond-point Abobo Anador, 2026

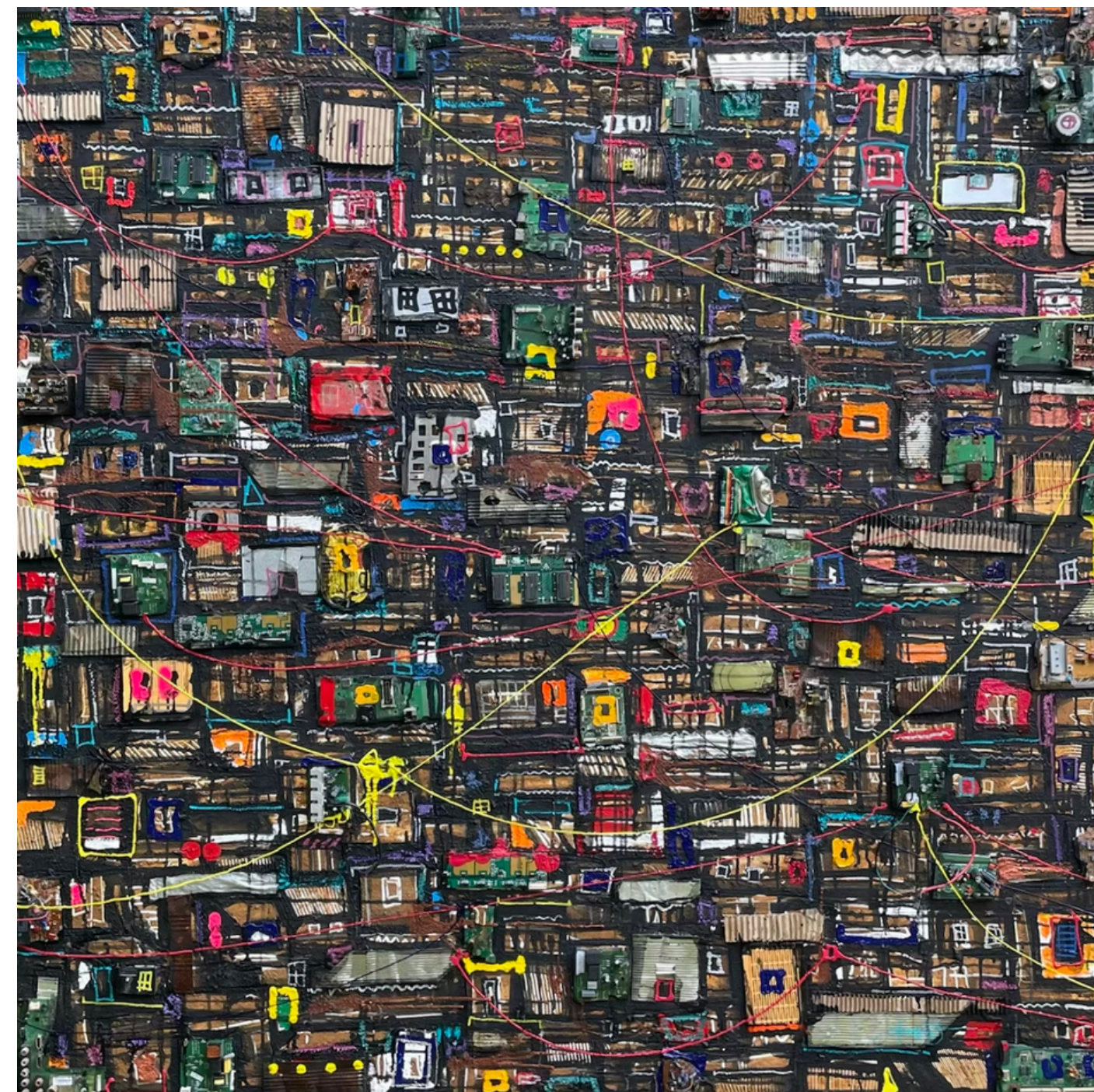
Mixed media: cardboard, metal, and acrylic on canvas.

200 X 200 cm



Power City #1, 2026

Mixed media: collages and acrylic on canvas.
150 x 150 cm



Power City #2, 2026

Mixed media: collages and acrylic on canvas.
150 x 150 cm



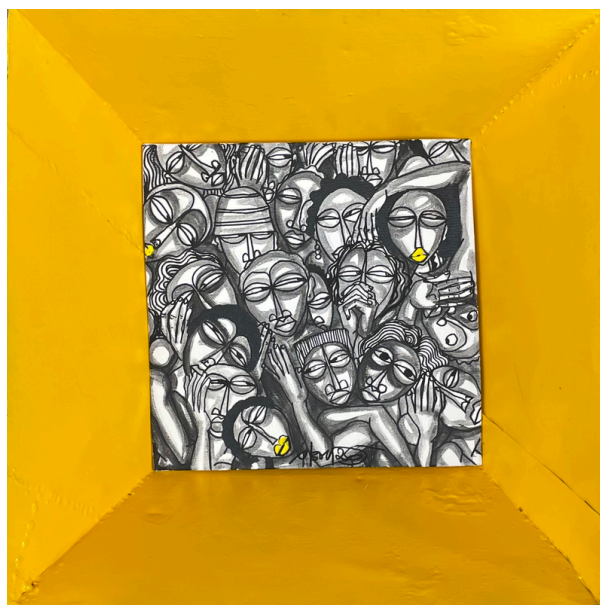
Anono Village, 2026

Acrylic on canvas
200 x 150 cm



Le Manoir Dan, 2026

Acrylic on canvas
200 x 150 cm



Cube Maggi Jaune #1, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, in a metal case.
45 x 25 x 25 cm



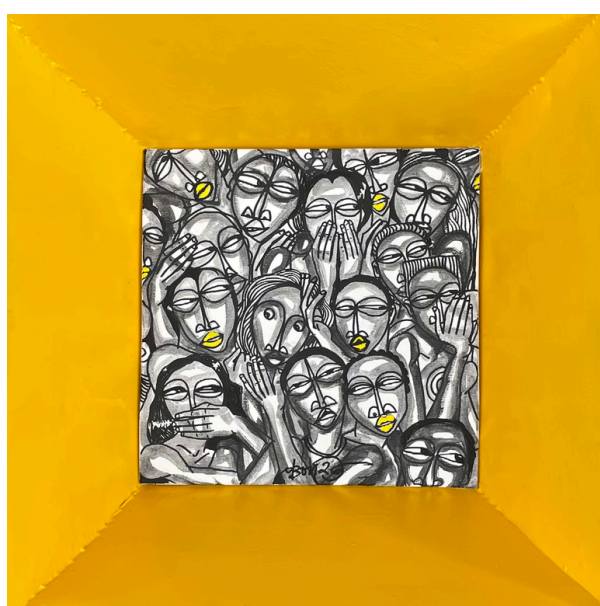
Cube Maggi Rouge #1, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, in a metal case.
35 x 15 x 15 cm



Cube Maggi Vert #1, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, in a metal case.
34 x 17 x 14 cm



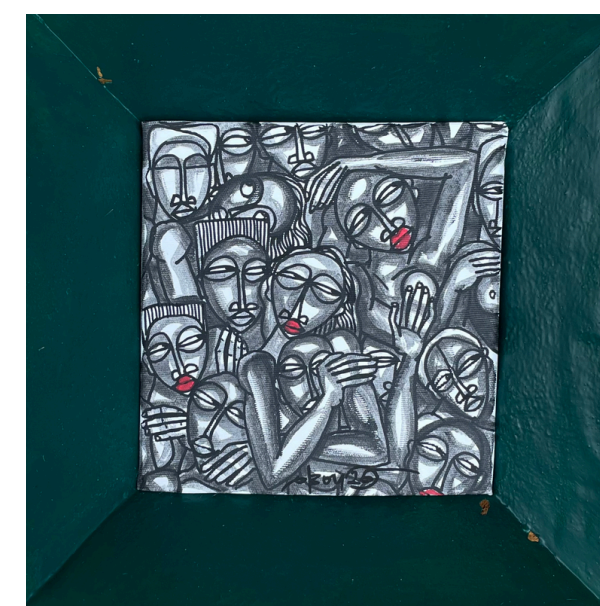
Cube Maggi Jaune #2, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, in a metal case.
45 x 25 x 25 cm



Cube Maggi Rouge #2, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, in a metal case.
35 x 15 x 15 cm



Cube Maggi Vert #2, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, in a metal case.
34 x 17 x 14 cm



The artist

Obou Gbais

"I no longer take inspiration from the mask; I've become the mask"
- Obou Gbais

Obou Gbais (born in 1992 in Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire) is an Ivorian contemporary artist. He trained at the École nationale des Beaux-Arts in Abidjan, where he obtained a Master's degree in Painting in 2019.

From an early stage, he developed a distinctive visual language. His work is notably characterized by the use of the Dan mask as a central motif, which he reinterprets and transforms over time: from a traditional form, it gradually becomes an inhabited face, marked by expressions and emotional presence.

His practice engages with contemporary urban dynamics in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly the realities of informal settlements. Crowds, precarious architectures, and invisible circulations are recurring elements in his compositions, through which he pays tribute to communities living within these environments. His work also addresses the representation of women and their lived realities, drawing from figures closely connected to his personal history.

Deeply rooted in the urban environment, Obou Gbais develops a practice that extends beyond the canvas. He regularly intervenes in public space—on walls, buildings, and through collaborations involving everyday objects—embedding his work within a logic of direct and accessible circulation. The Dan mask, used both as a visual motif and as a performative element, becomes a recognizable sign, carrying a cultural identity that he deploys across different contexts. This approach, situated between studio practice and public space, resonates with certain aspects of street art.

Alongside painting, he explores other media such as sculpture, design, and music, affirming a multidisciplinary practice. A prolific artist, he continuously develops and evolves his work, as seen in his recent interest in compositions more focused on urban structures and landscapes.

Obou's work has been featured in several exhibitions in Côte d'Ivoire and internationally, such as at the Museum Rietberg (Zurich, Switzerland) and the Vytautas Kasiulis Museum (Vilnius, Lithuania). He also participated in the group exhibition *Murmures d'archives - Sur les traces de Hans Himmelheber* at the Musée des Cultures Contemporaines Adama Toungara (MUCAT). Since 2020, his work has been acquired by numerous public and private collections worldwide.

He lives and works in Berlin (Germany).



Démarche artistique

"My work is a kind of diary in which I try to tell stories about myself and the people around me. My theme is the human condition, focusing on my culture and its masks. My practice is a kind of engaged poetry that challenges and seduces the viewer at the same time. I paint contemporary bodies and faces, but I also give a place to tradition. I see myself as a bridge between these two worlds."

- Obou Gbais



OBOU GBAIS

(Côte d'Ivoire, 1992)

SOLO SHOWS

- 2026** *Pop Mask*, Hoop Galerie, Paris, France
- 2025** *33 Portraits Dan*, Hoop Galerie, Paris, France
The Power of Love, Filafrique Gallery, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2024** *Neo Dan*, LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
The Garden of Obou, Hoop Galerie, Paris, France
- 2023** *Picnic by Obou*, Hoop Galerie, Paris, France
- 2022** *Le Bleu d'Obou*, Hoop Galerie, Paris, France
Man Dan, LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- 2021** *Maskology / Maskologie*, Englischer Garten, Munich, Germany

GROUP SHOWS (SELECTION) & OTHER PROJECTS

- 2025** *Murmures d'Archives - Sur les traces de Hans Himmelheber*, Musée des Cultures Contemporaines Adama Toungara, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire / Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland
Transmission, Galerie Filafrique, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2024** *Gesunder Größenwahn*, Not a Gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2023** *Exposed*, Atelierhaus, Aachen, Germany
Ambivalent, Not A Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Look Closer, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland
- 2022** *Scope Art Show*, Miami, United States
Foire AKA, Azz Art, Paris, France
Art Vilnius Art Fair, Tumo Gallery, Vilnius, Lithuania
Babi est doux, 193 Gallery, Paris, France
Group show, Filafrique, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2022** *Group show*, Filafrique, Geneva, Switzerland
Identités contemporaines de la Côte d'Ivoire, 24Beaubourg, Paris, France
OFF Dak'Art Biennale 2022, Loman Art Gallery, Dakar, Senegal
Contemporary African Art: The Dreams and Realities of Identity, Vytautas Kasiulis Art Museum, Vilnius, Lithuania
- 2021** *9 Valeurs Certaines*, Fondation BJKD, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Boogie-Woogie : Pour la Liberté, Iwalewahaus, Bayreuth, Germany
Foire 1-54 New York_Online, LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery
Abidjan Street Act : De la rue au MUCAT, Musée des Cultures Contemporaines Adama Toungara, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- 2020** *Show @ Ebony Art Spot*, Rotterdam, Netherlands
Streetart Project, Abobo, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Show @ Wetsy Art Gallery, Brussels, Belgium
Show @ Mainoeuvre Gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2019** *Densité*, LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Art Time, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- 2018** *Une chance à la vie*, La Rotonde des Arts, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Show @ La Case Bleue, Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire



The Gallery

LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery

LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery is a contemporary art gallery based in Abidjan, founded in 2015 by Simone and Gazelle Guirandou-Ndiaye. Conceived as a space for dialogue across generations, geographies, and artistic practices, the gallery has established itself as one of the most prominent voices on the Ivorian and African art scenes.

Located in the heart of Cocody, in a space bathed in natural light and recognizable by its façade inspired by woven fabrics, the gallery presents a demanding program open to experimentation, narrative, and memory. Whether through solo or group exhibitions, curatorial collaborations, or cross-disciplinary projects blending visual arts, writing, and performance, each initiative is conceived as a sensory experience rooted in its time.

The Gallery is committed to showcasing powerful artistic approaches, driven by both emerging and established artists from across Africa and its diaspora. Through its curatorial choices, its aesthetic stances, and its active engagement with the international network, LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery asserts a singular identity: free, bold, and radically contemporary.

The gallery's history is rooted in a pioneering legacy. Simone Guirandou-Ndiaye is a leading figure in the art world of Côte d'Ivoire. An art historian with a degree in Art History and Theory, she taught at the *École des Beaux-Arts d'Abidjan* (INSAAC) before founding, in 1991, *Arts Pluriels*, one of the first contemporary art galleries in Abidjan. She is also the founder of the *Salon International des Arts Plastiques d'Abidjan* (SIAPA) and an active member of the *Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art* (AICA, Côte d'Ivoire section) as well as the *Académie des Sciences, des Arts, des Cultures d'Afrique et des Diasporas Africaines* (ASCAD).

While this exceptional history continues to underpin the gallery's foundations, the LouiSimone Guirandou Gallery now embodies a vision firmly rooted in the future, led by Gazelle Guirandou. With a sensitive and intuitive curatorial approach, she develops a program that challenges, disrupts, and connects.

A vibrant, demanding gallery, in direct connection with its time—and deeply rooted in the city of Abidjan.





Infos

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Contacts	<p>Avenue Jean Mermoz prolongée Rue C27 (mitoyen au Goethe Institut) +225 27 22 54 04 61 +225 07 06 07 97 94</p> <p>Press contact : berenice@louisimoneguirandou.gallery</p> <p>www.louisimoneguirandou.gallery</p>
Dates	<p>Private cocktail reception on Wednesday, May 20, 2026 (by invitation only) Public opening on Friday, May 22, 2026</p> <p>Exhibition open to the public from May 21st to July 4th, 2026</p>
Access	<p>Free entry from Tuesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.</p>
Links to our social medias	 
Download link	<p>The Invisible City - Solo Show - Obou Gbais</p>

