



Evans Mbugua | Dennis Osadebe

A SPECTACULAR NOW

30 January - 16 February 2019





Evans Mbugua, *Your Captain*, 2018

A SPECTACULAR NOW

A masked drinker of smoothies and a yellow-maned dhow captain; blue wall against pink carpet and backdrops of tessellated plaited profiles – Evans Mbugua and Dennis Osadebe's compositions revel in colour and pattern. Their subjects stand or lounge, dance, glide, and sometimes tumble, in richly hued environments. Mbugua makes use of motifs lifted from the trivial, and the incidental – lorries and umbrellas, footprints and plaited hairstyles. Osadebe, in turn, uses carefully laid out blocks of colour and shapes assembled like cut-outs to create objects.

There is a lightheartedness that runs through the work of these artists. In their making, Evans Mbugua's exuberant portraits embrace and aspire to the rhythms of daily life that inform them. The ideographs repeat interminably, creating boundless worlds within which he frames his subjects. The subjects themselves appear as an abundance of coloured dots on sheets of Perspex which, once laid on top of each other, resolve into fine-grained visions of figures caught in moments of bliss, their body language suggesting an openness to the world around them. People he's known, people he's met, people whose stories and lives these works are a celebration of.

Where Mbugua reveals his subjects, Osadebe's are masked, giving rise to a cheeky tension in the play between these knowable, familiar interior scenes and the anonymous figures. The mask in question is one that alludes to traditional cultural practices in his native Nigeria but the settings and accouterments clearly belong to the present time. The enforced anonymity of his subjects leaves room to imagine a multitude of personas for them, and the spaces they inhabit suggest their belonging to cosmopolitan society, from whose swirl their identities emerge.

A Spectacular Now is an invitation to delight in the present and find pleasure in the everyday. Key to the work of these artists is optimism and an insistence on drawing happiness from the vicissitudes of daily life, to indulge in the fleeting moments of joy and the infinite possibilities that the future holds.

EVANS MBUGUA, Kenyan (b. 1979)

I'm a visual artist and a designer.

I was born in Nairobi, I live in Paris, both modern and cosmopolitan cities that are characterized by the cultural mix of diverse populations.

No matter which creative tool I choose to express myself, humans are at the heart of my artistic approach. Each one of us has their own story to tell. I paint, take photographs and film: hope, joy, zest for life, love, pleasure, sharing, presence, a shout, pride, silence, emotions, time, the future...

I portray my life, that of my friends and strangers. In this way, diversity nourishes my curiosity of the world. I take a look at our identities and their hidden facets and favour portraits to celebrate my characters. I use glass and perspex to beautify my subjects by shine and reflections, while underlining human frailty. In my work, pictograms represent our urban environment which shapes the rhythms of our lives and which, in turn, becomes my playground.

Exhibition history:

Evans Mbugua's works are held in public and private collections in Europe, Africa and North America. He has been included in several international group exhibitions and his latest solo shows include *Dialogue* (2017), Gallery of African Art (GAFRA), London; *Highlife* (2017), Galerie Art-Z, Paris and *Evans Mbugua* (2016), Ellia Art Gallery, Paris and, most recently, *Recall*, at Art-Z in Paris . Mbugua has also shown his work at international art fairs including *1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair* in London, *AKAA* in Paris and *ART X Lagos*, Lagos.



Evans Mbugua, *One Love*, 2018

DENNIS OSADEBE, Nigerian (b. 1991)

Dennis Osadebe is a mixed-media artist best known for his contemporary, vibrant, post-pop sensibility. Osadebe's style is a unique blend of digital processes which he uses to create canvasses that are subsequently layered with acrylic paint. With his characteristic use of flattened planes and bold colour, the artist creates what he refers to as a "neo" visual style, one that is modern, bright, expressive and provocative.

Osadebe uses play and provocation to invite viewers to critically think about their world and their place within it. Central to Osadebe's imagined narrative are the symbols of the helmet and the mask, reoccurring visual elements that bind the diverse characters together. In one sense, the helmet functions as a form of protective gear against the harmful effects of the outside environment. There is also an inherent sense of isolation which parallels the isolation created by our technologies. These symbols also make their wearers anonymous, leaving room for imagination on the viewer's part in the way they read and interpret the goings on in his compositions.

Education and Exhibition history:

Osadebe obtained a BSc in Business and Management from Queen Mary University of London and an MSc from the University of Warwick, Coventry, majoring in Innovation and Entrepreneurship. He has exhibited widely since his relocation to Lagos in 2013 and has also collaborated with international brands such as Diesel. He has participated in group and solo exhibitions at Art Twenty One, Rele Gallery and Arthouse Contemporary in Lagos, Nigeria. Internationally, he has shown his work at the London Illustration Fair in 2017, the FNB Jo'burg Art Fair in 2017, The Other Art Fair, NY, 2017 & 2018. In January 2019 Osadebe had a solo exhibition, *Portrait of a Future Generation*, at Galerie Luisa Wang in Paris.



Dennis Osadebe, *Still Life with Some Dude*, 2018



Dennis Osadebe, *Hoop Dreams*, 2018



Evans Mbugua, *Tata*, 2018



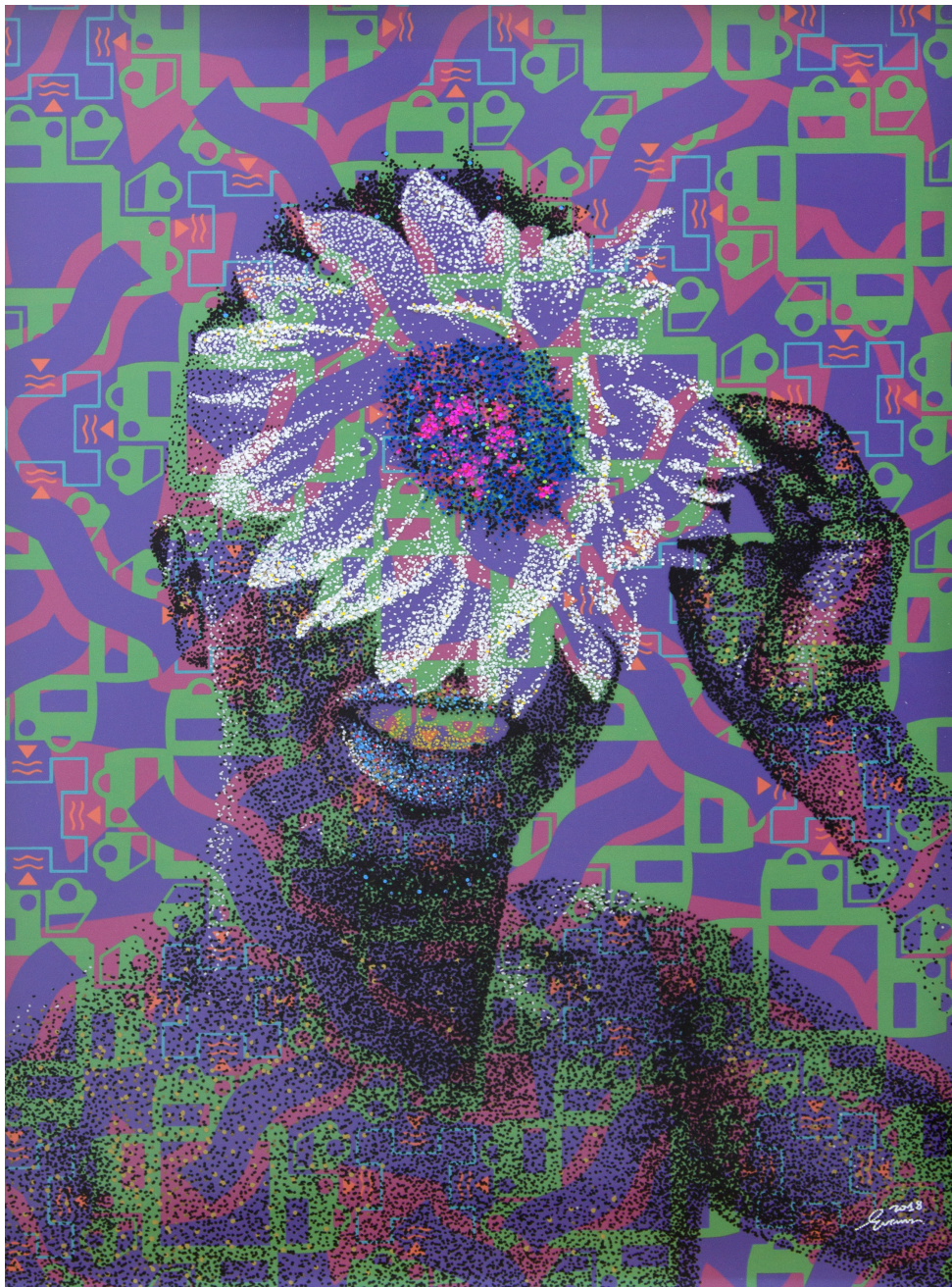
Evans Mbugua, *Blinky!*, 2018



Dennis Osadebe, *Society Woman*, 2018



Dennis Osadebe, *Biker With a Lance*, 2018



Evans Mbugua, *Selfie Sunny*, 2018

Founded in 2012, and based in Nairobi, Kenya, Circle Art Gallery promotes contemporary art from Eastern Africa.

Through group and solo exhibitions, as well as participation in various international art fairs, the gallery has increased local and international visibility for established and emerging artists. Working closely with local and international collectors, curators, we are building a strong and sustainable market for East African artists.

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Gallery hours: Monday to Friday 10am - 5pm, Saturday 12 - 5pm

Front cover: Dennis Osadebe, *Gentle Man on a Horse (Indoors)*, 2018

Inside front cover: Evans Mbugua, *Your Captain*, 2018

Back cover: Evans Mbugua, *Pamoja*, 2018

