



July 27, 2015

Richard Taittinger Gallery presents ‘Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?’

By Sasha Dees

Richard Taittinger Gallery, New York is proud to present *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?*, a summer showcase of works by an exciting crop of contemporary artists from Africa, curated by Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, artist, art historian, and specialist in modern and contemporary African and African diaspora arts. Sasha Dees shares an overview of the show, which celebrates African art and serves as a crucial platform for its visibility in New York. The exhibition runs until August 22, 2015.



Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? is a survey of contemporary African art curated by Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi. Borrowing its title from Sidney Poitier’s 1967 classic film, the exhibition celebrates the growing impact of African art on the global stage.

The exhibition challenges received or fixed assumptions of “Africanness” as a cultural signifier or aesthetic primer in the work of twelve contemporary African artists: Aida Muluneh, Amalia Ramanankirahina, Amina Menia, Beatrice Wanjiku, Chika Modum, Chike Obeagu, Ephrem Solomon, Gopal Dagnogo, Halida Boughriet, Onyeka Ibe, Sam Hopkins, and Uche Uzorka.



Dagnogo's large and bright canvases pull you into the gallery. Up close the works are very layered, and if we take time we can find multiple points of entry. They talk about materialism and the rat race people are in to become 'haves' instead of 'have nots'. We can see specific colonial next to universal everyday references. In Dagnogo's view, capitalism, its marketing and branding, as well as the western concept of democracy, have destroyed the social community structures and leadership that worked and were common to the continent Africa. This led to a change in mentality of the people and left many countries in disarray.

Most of the other works in the exhibit also talk about the challenges African countries and its citizens had and still have, after the end of the occupation by European countries and the trauma the Europeans left behind. Others talk about the everyday life and experience of people of African descent working and living outside Africa. All works are critically engaged and intersect with global, universal views that are specific to international contemporary art practice.



Folks indeed better come to terms with seats at the dinner table being secured by non-white artists. The Venice Biennale as well as fairs, museums, and galleries in the UK and US in the past 5-10 years have increasingly and successfully begun to open up. Rightfully so, given that the European occupation in other continents has mostly ended! In order to keep its relevance, the art world has to be reflective of what and who we are today.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

July 16– August 22, 2015

Richard Taittinger Gallery, 154 Ludlow, NYC