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Who's in and Who's Out at 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair This Year?

By Sarah Cascone



1:54 New York 2015 at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn. Photo: © Katrina Sorrentino, courtesy 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair.

"We came in as a pop-up last year trying to see if there was a market for us," 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair director Touria El Glaoui told artnet News in a phone interview. Based on 2015's inaugural success, the fair, which will take place at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn from May 6–8, will be even more robust in its second year in New York, with a carefully-curated selection of 17 galleries.

In its Brooklyn edition, it can afford to be choosy. Unlike the original London fair, which was founded in 2013 and accepts applications, 1:54 New York is strictly invitation-only. The fair takes its name from the 54 countries in Africa, and does its best to be fully-representative of the continent. To that end, the 60 artists featured in this year's fair hail from an impressive 25 countries.

"We are filling this void in New York, where contemporary African artists are not as well-represented as the rest of the world's artists," said El Glaoui.



1:54 New York 2015 at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn. Photo: © Katrina Sorrentino, courtesy 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair.

Julie Taylor, founder and director of online South African gallery Guns and Rain, sees 1:54 as a sign of positive change. "African art is perhaps 'becoming ordinary," she told artnet News in an e-mail. "If 'ordinary' equates to securing the independence, recognition, and respect that African art professionals have long sought, then African contemporary art is certainly much closer to coming of age."

Pioneer Works has offered a slot in its artists residency program to 1:54 artist Omar Victor Diop, whose showing at Paris's Magnin-A gallery was one of the standouts of the 2015 edition, according to El Glaoui. "He's quite an interesting photographer and he has done this amazing series of important Africans in history," she said.

This year, over half of the roster is new at the fair, with just eight returning galleries from the inaugural New York run. Of the additions, five have previously shown with 1:54 in London, while four, including New York's Richard Taittinger Gallery and Milan's Officine dell'Immagine, have never participated in the fair on either side of the Atlantic.

Although 1:54 purposely varied its New York slate of dealers in order to provide exposure for a new group of artists, at least one gallery isn't back for a reason. Arabella Bennett, founder of Cape Town's Bennett Contemporary blamed "the depreciating South African rand" for her decision not to show in 2016, telling artnet News in a phone conversation that while "we enjoyed ourselves very much... it's a very expensive fair for the number of sales that we made."

Despite its small scale, the fair's international scope is impressive, with galleries from South Africa, Italy, Kenya, Switzerland, the US, France, Côte d'Ivoire, Spain, and the UK. Programming, curated by Koyo Kouoh, of Daka'r RAW Material Company, will include a lecture series and panel discussions.

See the full list of participating galleries and artists below:

Afronova (Johannesburg, South Africa)

APALAZZOGALLERY (Brescia, Italy)

ARTLabAfrica (Nairobi, Kenya)

Art Bärtschi & Cie (Geneva, Switzerland)

Axis Gallery (New York, USA)

David Krut Projects (Johannesburg, South Africa & New York, USA)

Galerie Anne De Villepoix (Paris, France)

Galerie Cécile Fakhoury (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)

In Situ / Fabienne Leclerc (Paris, France)

Jack Bell Gallery (London, United Kingdom)

Magnin-A (Paris, France)

Mariane Ibrahim Gallery (Seattle, USA)

Officine dell'Immagine (Milan, Italy)

Richard Taittinger Gallery (New York, USA)

Sabrina Amrani Gallery (Madrid, Spain)

(S)ITOR / Sitor Senghor (Paris, France)

Tafeta (London, United Kingdom)

Aboudia

Derrick Adams

Leonce Raphael Agbodjelou

Joseph Moise Agbodjelou

ruby oyinyechi amanze

Emma Amos

Joel Andrianomearisoa

Mustapha Azeroual

Omar Ba

Sammy Baloji

Steve Bandoma

Armand Boua

Nathalie Boutté

Sonia Boyce

Edson Chagas

Jim Chuchu

Endale Desalegn

Safaa Erruas

Theo Eshetu

Em'Kal Eyongakpa

Meschac Gaba

Frances Goodman

Mwangi Hutter

Ayana V. Jackson

William Kentridge

Farah Khelil

Yashua Klos

Lawrence Lemaoana

John Liebenberg

Ndary Lo

Gonçalo Mabunda

Ibrahim Mahama

Hamidou Maiga

Houston Maludi

Abu Bakarr Mansaray

Misheck Masamvu

Vincent Michéa

Fabrice Monteiro

Aida Muluneh

Cheikh Ndiaye

Otobong Nkanga

Boris Nzebo

Uche Okpa-iroha

Babajide Olatunji

Adeniyi Olagunju

Paul Onditi

Zohra Opoku

Athi-Patra Ruga

William Sagna

Kura Shomali

Gor Soudan

Uman

Nontsikelelo Veleko

Diane Victor

Béatrice Wanjiku

Graeme Williams

Sue Williamson

Yéanzi

Billie Zangewa

Dominique Zinkpé

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair is on view at Pioneer Works, 159 Pioneer Street, Red Hook, Brooklyn, May 6–8, 2016.