



Sguardi sull'Africa

1/03 - 4/05/2026

Group Show

curated by Samuele Menin & Paolo Giglio

Palazzo Gotico, Piacenza



THE EXHIBITION

Comprising 54 nations, endowed with extraordinary natural resources, rich in cultures and traditions, and widely regarded as the cradle of humankind, Africa continues to exert a powerful fascination within today’s intercultural and global landscape.

From March 1st, the historic halls of Palazzo Gotico—one of Piacenza’s oldest buildings—will host *Sguardi sull’Africa*, an exhibition curated by Paolo Giglio and Samuele Menin. Through a selection of 250 artworks and artefacts, the exhibition explores the richness, complexity, and diversity of African artistic production.

Emerging from the growing recognition of African artists and their ability to bridge tradition and contemporaneity, *Sguardi sull’Africa* also highlights the longstanding relationship between Piacenza and Africa. This connection dates back to the 1960s, with the construction of the Kariba Dam on the Zambezi River, which involved a local company, and has been further strengthened by figures of profound humanitarian commitment such as Father Vittorio Pastori, founder of the *Africa Mission Movement*, active since the 1970s—particularly in Uganda.

The exhibition brings together works from two major collections—the Giglio Collection of Paolo and Bruno Giglio and Collezione54 of Rosario Bifulco—and is structured into sections dedicated to ritual objects and sculptures, 1930s Moroccan painting, and contemporary African art, featuring both emerging and established artists. The display, designed by Studio Fosbury, establishes a dynamic dialogue with the historic architecture of Palazzo Gotico.

Rather than following a chronological or didactic approach, the exhibition adopts a relational structure inspired by the metaphor of a medieval choir. This unified spatial device highlights both the individuality of each work and the resonances between them, offering a layered and non-linear experience. Sculptures, ritual objects, masks, and paintings inhabit the space as active presences rather than simply exhibited artefacts.

The section devoted to *Ritual Objects and Sculptures* presents works originally created for use rather than contemplation: masks, statues, ritual instruments, and everyday objects that act as mediators between the visible and invisible worlds. These objects embody functions related to protection, healing, fertility, knowledge, and identity, where value lies not in formal aesthetics but in symbolic and spiritual efficacy. Drawn from the collection of Professor René Marcy (University of Caen Normandy), these works were a fundamental source of inspiration for many twentieth-century artists, including Picasso, Brancusi, Modigliani, and Giacometti. Their extraordinary variety, when displayed together, reveals the richness of cultural exchange that characterises the African continent.

The section *The Casablanca School and Modernism in Morocco* presents works by Mohammed Ben Ali R’bati, Farid Belkahia, Ahmed Cherkaoui, Fatna Gbouri, Hassan El Glaoui, Jilali Gharbaoui, Fatima Hassan El Farouj, Mohamed Melehi, Mohamed Kacimi, Chaibia Talal, and Jacques Majorelle. These artists addressed a shared question: how can one be contemporary without abandoning visual and symbolic memory? While artists of the *Casablanca School* such as Farid Belkahia and Mohamed Melehi sought to construct modernity from within tradition, others—including Chaibia Talal, Fatna Gbouri, and Fatima Hassan El Farouj—developed highly personal and intuitive approaches, equally innovative in their outcomes. Together, these practices reflect a broader tendency in twentieth-century Moroccan art to transform memory and lived experience into contemporary visual language.

The section dedicated to *Contemporary African Art* from Collezione54, assembled over more than thirty years by Rosario Bifulco, includes works by Admire Kamudzengerere, Amani Bodo, Patrick Bongoy, Wim Botha, Edson Chagas, Meschac Gaba, Maimouna Guerresi, Fathi Hassan, Pieter Hugo, Cyrus Kabiru, Bonolo Kavula, Abdoulaye Konaté, Teresa Kutala Firmino, Ibrahim Mahama, Zanele Muholi, Kelechi Charles Nwaneri, Chéri Samba, Barthélémy Toguo, and Raymond Tsham.

Spanning painting, photography, textile works, and installation, these works reflect the multiplicity of perspectives and contexts that define contemporary African art today. They address themes such as **materiality and memory**, identity and representation, and the transformation and reuse of materials. The result is a dynamic **field of relationships** capable of generating new narratives of the present.

The final section, *Young Voices*, brings together works by **Ako Atikossie, Ibrahim Ballo, Soly Cissé, Binta Diaw, Adjie Dieye, Victor Fotso Nyie, Francis Offman, Odinakachi Okoroafor, and Pedro Pires**. It presents a generation of young and emerging artists whose practices engage with contemporary **transformations** of identity and the complex relationships between African cultures, **migration**, and diaspora.

Coming from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, often shaped by migratory experience, these artists explore the **diaspora** as a dynamic space of exchange and **transformation**, where roots and change coexist in constant negotiation. Through **painting, photography, sculpture, installation, and archival practices**, they address themes of **memory, colonial legacy, and systems of representation** that have historically shaped **simplified narratives** of Africa and its communities.

Accompanied by a rich programme of collateral events, *Sguardi sull’Africa*, in collaboration with the social cooperative *Arti e Pensieri*, places particular emphasis on **educational activities**, including **workshops** for schools, families, and adults. The exhibition is further enriched by **talks and round tables** on contemporary Africa curated by **Mauro Molinaroli**, as well as performances of **dance, music, and theatre**, offering a multifaceted portrait of a continent in constant transformation.



Young Voices
Ako Atikossie

Entitled *Young Voices*, this section brings together a generation of predominantly young and emerging artists whose practices offer attentive and informed perspectives on the transformations of contemporary identities and on the relationships between African cultures, migration, and diaspora. Like a choir, in which younger voices contribute intonation, energy, and momentum, the artists presented here bring strength, clarity, and sensitivity to the renewal of cultural debate, introducing fresh perspectives and new imaginaries.

The metaphor of the choir also suggests a balance between individuality and collective expression: each artist pursues an autonomous practice, yet together these works create a shared space of reflection. What emerges is a polyphony of experiences and viewpoints that conveys the complexity of the present and testifies to the active role of younger generations in redefining contemporary languages and narratives.

Coming from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, often shaped by transnational life experiences, these artists reflect on what it means today to grow and form one's identity across multiple places, languages, and cultural frameworks. In their works, migration is not merely a physical displacement but a condition that reshapes memory, belonging, and relationships with both past and present. Diaspora thus emerges as a dynamic space of exchange and transformation, where roots and change coexist and continuously evolve.

Through a variety of media—including painting, photography, sculpture, installation, and archival practices—the artists address themes related to historical memory, colonial legacies, and systems of representation that have contributed to the construction of often simplified narratives about Africa and its communities worldwide. Their works challenge these imaginaries, proposing more nuanced readings and restoring the complexity of contemporary experiences.

At the same time, the works express the energy, vitality, and innovative spirit that characterise African cultures and their diasporic expressions. Far from static or stereotypical representations, what emerges is a dynamic and evolving landscape shaped by research, experimentation, and constant redefinition, in which tradition and contemporaneity engage in an ongoing process of mutual transformation.

Taken together, the works presented in *Young Voices* function as a space of awareness and dialogue. Like voices in a choir that, while distinct, come together to form a shared harmony, these artists offer individual contributions that collectively articulate a more nuanced and plural understanding of mobility, identity, and intercultural encounter in the contemporary world.



Ako Atikossie is a Togolese artist born in 1980 in Zalivè. He currently lives and works between Milan and Lomé, Togo.

Atikossie occupies a distinctive position within the contemporary art scene. Far removed from the autobiographical self-referentiality that often characterizes contemporary artistic practice, his work does not place himself or his everyday life at its center. Instead, it focuses on investigating and revealing the most intimate nature of the phenomena that surround human existence.

With an approach closer to that of a scientist than an artist, Atikossie studies and makes visible the intangible and unseen physical forces that govern life on Earth. His work explores the complex interconnections upon which all forms of life depend—relationships that are increasingly disrupted by human actions and behaviors.

Some regions of the world are more affected by these imbalances than others, and among them is Africa, Atikossie's continent of origin. Arriving in Italy from Togo to further his artistic education and engage with what is often presented as the singular “Western art system,” he embraced new experiences while maintaining a strong environmental awareness. Over time, he developed a unique pictorial language through which he addresses issues such as the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources and the geopolitical struggle for control over the rare earth minerals that are essential to the development of new technologies.

To articulate these concerns, Atikossie has developed a painting practice based on the repetition of a minimal mark: a short line. Repeated thousands of times across the canvas, this simple gesture generates vibrant abstract compositions pulsating with color. Accessible to anyone, the act recalls both writing and weaving, sharing with them the same extended temporality and labor-intensive process—one built through knots and warp threads in weaving, and through the accumulation of strokes and counter-strokes in Atikossie's practice.

An artistic practice deeply rooted in the traditional artisanal and tribal decorative cultures of the African continent, Atikossie's work seeks to investigate the mysteries of nature and matter. As the artist explains: “In my research, I explore various orientations of the minus sign, creating forms, spaces, and geometric dimensions. I consider the ‘–’ mark as a representation of the electron, a symbol that helps us understand and investigate the fundamental components of matter. Through my work, I create non-existent or abstract spaces that aim to evoke the viewer's intuition regarding the dynamic nature of matter.”

Ako Atikossie's works are at once simple and complex.

They are living works—works to be experienced as much as observed.



Oltre i cieli

2025

acrylic and oil on canvas

300 x 420 cm



Apertura della capsula
2025
acrylic and oil on canvas
220 x 128 x 9 cm

L'Europa o L'Assenza
plaster sculpture
73 x 40 x 40 cm





L'Europa o L'Assenza
plaster sculpture
65 x 40 x 40 cm

L'Europa o L'Assenza
plaster sculpture
73 x 40 x 40 cm





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