

NO

BECAUSE

IT'S
AFRICA'S
TURN

**A GALLERY THAT
WILL SHOWCASE
CONTEMPORARY
ART BY AFRICAN
ARTISTS HAS
OPENED IN
SWITZERLAND.**

South African founder Marianne Fourie chatted to us about Semaphore and an upcoming **SIWA MGOBOZA EXHIBITION, CALLED AFRICADIA.**

How did Semaphore come about?

Ten years ago, when I was living in the US, I saw a lot of art by Chinese and Middle-Eastern artists in the galleries of New York. I remember thinking, "When will it be Africa's turn?" In 2013 the African contemporary art fair 1:54 was founded in London, and it's now held in New York as well. Paris also



01 *Les Etres D'Africadia I Serpentina Jonza*, photographic print.



02 *Les Etres D'Africadia IV Pajarina Fantina*, photographic print.



03 *Les Etres D'Africadia III Jameezena Bulloza*, photographic print.

has an African contemporary art fair: AKA A (Also Known as Africa). It's Africa's turn for attention from the art world. I suppose you could qualify this new interest as a trend, but it will draw a lot of attention to talented and deserving artists.

How did you find artists to exhibit?

I contacted some artists I know and also did what most galleries do when they start out: I sent out a call for work and had a huge response. Calls for work are a very good way to learn more about artists – not only about the quality of their work but also their motivation to exhibit.

Describe the gallery space

Minimalism is the mantra of art galleries. You want the artwork to speak loudly, not your decor. This said, you still want the space to look good. I was happy to find a large semi-circular vintage desk in the small ads. It has a good surface area for work, but takes up less room than a rectangular desk. With its 1990s rounded edges and chrome finishing, it adds a touch of retro futurism. For visitors to the gallery I got two opaque AVA bridge chairs, designed by Song Wen Zhong for Roche Bobois, but I have been using one of them myself because it's so comfortable and I haven't had time to look for an office chair.

A solo exhibition of works by Siwa Mgoboza is on the cards. What in his work speaks to you?

Fundamental to his art is a virtuosous feeling for colour and pattern, and an intelligent use of juxtaposition. It is visually appealing and has substance at the same time, which is a difficult balance to strike. Siwa embodies a lot of what the gallery stands for. He is an African who believes deeply in his cultural heritage and in an African future, yet his artistic universe is easily understandable to people of other cultures.

What plans do you have for the future?

I would like Semaphore to show art that is diverse. I want every show to be different. We are thinking of participating in one of the major African contemporary art fairs soon. Ultimately, I would like to find a larger gallery to be able to show more artworks and have space for large-scale installations.

• semaphore.gallery

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