



Pilipili MULONGOY, Untitled (Cheetah) - 115 x 137 cm, Est: 9 000 - 12 000 €

PRESS RELEASE - THE ARTISTS OF LE HANGAR,  
THE ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART  
SALE - MODERN AFRICAN ART - 24 MARCH 2021, PARIS

On the occasion of the 24 March auction, Artcurial will launch the exhibition *«The artists of Le Hangar, the origins of contemporary African art»*, from 18 to 22 March. The auction house will present some thirty works by the masters of Congolese modern art, including Mode Muntu, Bela Sara, Pilipili, Mwenze Kibwanga and Kabinda. This is an opportunity to discover the work of these artists, with a clear connection between classical art and contemporary African art.

## PRESS RELEASE - THE ARTISTS OF LE HANGAR, THE ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART

PARIS - For the sale taking place on 24 March, Artcurial will present an exhibition of the "Artists of Le Hangar" from 18 to 22 March 2021. These artists worked in the studio of Pierre Romain-Desfossés in the mid 20th century in Elisabethville (today known as Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

Artcurial will present some thirty works by the masters of Congolese modern art, including Mode Muntu, Bela Sara, Pilipili, Mwenze Kibwanga and Kabinda. The exhibition of museum quality, with works coming principally from Belgian collections, reveals the connections between these self-taught artists and contemporary work.

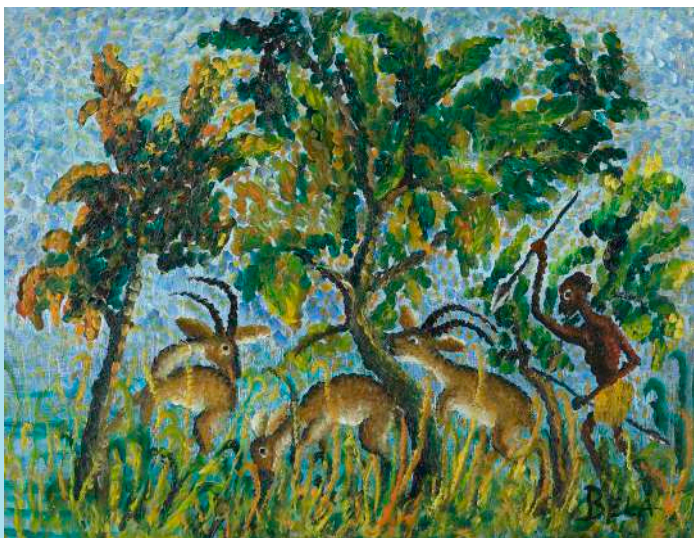
A genuine link between classical art and contemporary African art, the work of the artists of Le Hangar, which developed away from any Western influence, was not on the radar for collectors until the exhibition *Beauté Congo* at the Cartier Foundation in 2014-2015 revealed its modernity. Since then, this work has become highly prized by collectors.

*« The artists of Le Hangar are storytellers who recount with great spontaneity and freedom the details of their day-to-day lives, the ceremonies, the fishing and hunting. The abundance of animals, fish and other themes naturally bring to mind fables that can be interpreted in many different ways. »*

**Christophe Person, Director  
Contemporary African Art, Artcurial**

*« The modernity of these artists jumps out at us today. The themes and techniques are key to understanding the sources of inspiration for many contemporary artists. »*

**Aude de Vaucresson, Specialist  
Post War & Contemporary Art, Artcurial Belgium**



BELA  
Untitled  
Oil on panel - 58 x 76 cm  
Estimate : 5 500 - 7 500 €



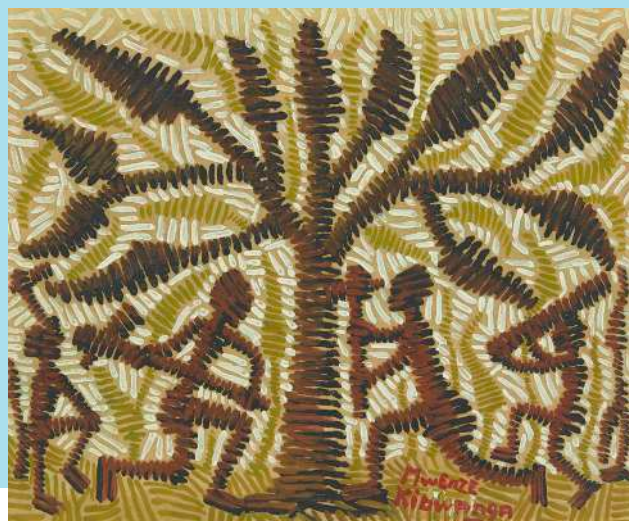
Pilipili MULONGOY  
Untitled (White herons) - 137 x 199 cm  
Estimate : 12 000 - 18 000 €



Sylvestre KABALLA  
*Le combat*, 1959  
Oil on panel - 30 x 42 cm  
Estimate : 4 000 - 6 000 €



Mwenze KIBWANGA  
Untitled  
Oil on card - 36 x 44 cm  
Estimate : 2 000 - 3 000 €



## *Le Hangar School*

The School of Le Hangar was set up in the 1940s in Elisabethville, known today as Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, established by Pierre Romain-Desfossés. At the start of the 1940s, Romain-Desfossés, a former Breton officer in the French navy, travelled across Africa with Bela, from the Sara tribe, in search of somewhere to settle. An artist himself, and appreciative of the indigenous art in Brazzaville, he devoted himself to painting and writing, before moving to Elisabethville at the end of 1944, when the cultural scene was flourishing. Involved in founding the African Union of Arts and Letters, with its objective to promote indigenous art, he then set up Le Hangar. This centre for the arts did not set out to teach its students about Western art, but rather to encourage them to experiment and develop their own paths. In line with their talents, these artists favoured painting, illustration and decorative arts. There was no 'school' or teachers to hold these pupils back, who instead were encouraged to express their own vision of the African environment. From here, European institutions began to take an interest and certain artists from Le Hangar had work exhibited in Brussels, Paris, Rome, London, and later New York and South Africa. With themes all linked to the natural world, Bela, Mwenze Kibwanga and Pililipi, each with their own vocabulary, depict scenes portraying hunting, fishing and ceremonies. Wild animals, fish, birds and hunters evolve like tales from the savannah.

## *Mwenze Kibwanga*

*Mwenze Kibwanga joined Le Hangar in 1950 and stayed for the next four years. His work has a unique style, with brushstrokes crossing the entire composition. Inspired by traditional fabrics, the background to his hunting and ceremonial scenes appears to vibrate, as in his untitled oil on cardboard, estimated between 2 000 and 3 000 €. Mwenze portrays a sense of movement on a completely flat plane, without perspective.*

## *Bela*

Bela, originally from Chad and belonging to the Sara tribe, became the right-hand man for the French officer and artist Romain Desfossés in 1940. The first «disciple» of Desfossés, Bela was interested in the ocean floor and, very probably influenced by his protector, in hunting scenes, bush landscapes that were often menacing and human initiation dances in the moonlight. An outstanding colourist, he juggled bright and contrasting colours, often using unrealistic shades, such as depicting the bottom of the ocean in a sparkling yellow. His digital technique, without using outlines, give his compositions a sense of rhythm and tension, as can be seen in his paintings offered in the sale, such as *Poissons* (est: 5 000 - 8 000 €) and an untitled natural scene, estimated between 5 500 and 7 500 €.

## *Upcoming Contemporary African Art events at Artcurial*

Exhibition : *Exceptions d'Afrique, artisanat d'art* during the Salon Révélations at the Grand Palais  
Ephémère

Contemporary African Art sale : 29 April 2021 in Marrakech, 15 June 2021 Paris



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## USEFUL INFORMATION

**Viewing** Thursday 18, Friday 19, Monday 21 & Tuesday 22 March 2021  
**Sale** Wednesday 24 March 2021

Artcurial - 7, rond-point des Champs-Élysées - 75008 Paris

**High Resolution images available on request**

## UPCOMING AT ARTCURIAL

**29 April 2021:** sale at La Mamounia, Marrakech,  
*Contemporary African Art & Made in Morocco*

**15 June 2021:** sale in Paris - *Contemporary African Art*

## ABOUT ARTCURIAL

Founded in 2002, multidisciplinary Paris based auction house, Artcurial confirmed its leading position in 2019 on the international art market scene. With three sale venues (Paris, Monte-Carlo and Hong Kong), Artcurial achieved an overall sales total of 203,1 M€ in 2019. Artcurial covers all the major specialist fields: From Beaux-Arts to Decorative Arts, Collectors' Cars, jewellery and watches, Fine wine and spirits. With a strong international bias, Artcurial maintains its presence abroad with offices in Milan, Vienna and Brussels, Monte-Carlo and Munich and representatives in Beijing and Tel Aviv, as well as twice-yearly exhibitions in New York. In October 2015, Artcurial held its first sale in Hong Kong and Morocco.

[www.artcurial.com](http://www.artcurial.com)

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