

# TEMPLON

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OMAR BA

ARTDAILY, 15 October, 2019



**Montreal Museum of Fine Arts presents Omar Ba's first Canadian monographic exhibition**

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Omar Ba (born in 1977), *Eternal Resemblance 1*, 2017, oil, pencil, acrylic, ink and gouache on kraft paper with polyester foam. Image courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London and New York. Photo Charles Littlewood. © Omar Ba. Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery.

**MONTREAL.-** In collaboration with Toronto's Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, the [Montreal Museum of Fine Arts](#) is presenting the first Canadian monographic exhibition dedicated to Omar Ba, one of the most influential artists of his generation. Omar Ba: Same Dream showcases a selection of Ba's major works from different periods in his career.

As for what he would like the public to take away from his work and this exhibition, Omar Ba says: "I'd like people to see that we need to give African artists their rightful place, and I also hope they come away with a more positive image of humankind. That we realize that beyond conflict, religion and culture, we are all one. That there are no blacks, yellows or whites – only humans. I also want to convey the idea of an Africa that's reasserting its place: of countries free of conflict and dictators that people are no longer forced to leave in order to have a good life. In

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fact, it's my dream that the continent share its riches with every other country in the world in a mutual respect between African and Western leaders."

Nathalie Bondil, Director General and Chief Curator, MMFA, and Gaëtane Verna, Director of the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, delightedly add: "This is the first time our two institutions have collaborated together! We are convinced that this particular vision of contemporary Africa will surprise and enchant our Canadian audiences. By marrying current realities with disparate mythological elements, a fantastical bestiary and African traditions, Ba creates powerful economic and political metaphors for his continent."

Omar Ba's work engages with some of the most urgent issues of our time: the global inequality of wealth and power, immigration crises and our changing relationship to the natural world. His penchant for depicting personal narratives alongside collective ones speaks to the multivalent character of his work.

In his practice, Ba synthesizes the visual texture of his two homes – Dakar, Senegal, and Geneva, Switzerland – combining the historical and the contemporary, elements African and European, as well as a range of techniques and tools including corrugated cardboard and his bare hands. Ba prepares his surfaces – be they cardboard, canvas or wall – with a black ground, upon which he layers vivid colours and complex compositions teeming with detail. His figures emerge from lush flora and fauna and biomorphic forms inspired by the dazzling coast of Senegal, where he grew up. Micro-worlds exist within larger constellations that evoke a shared cosmogony between humans, plants and animals.

Mary-Dailey Desmarais, who curated the Montreal presentation and is Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, MMFA, explains: "Same Dream reveals at once the artist's profound critique of authoritarianism and his deep embrace of the resilience and perseverance of the human spirit. Representations of dictators and despots depicted as hybrid half-beasts are set in dialogue with paintings of youth and strong women that convey hope for the future. This duality in Ba's choice of subject matter underscores today's divided reality, precariously straddled between development and destruction... Across different cultures of today, he explores a recurrent motif of birth, death and reincarnation."

Omar Ba (born 1977, Dakar, Senegal) lives and works between Dakar and Geneva. His work has been shown at BOZAR, Brussels, Belgium (2017); Ferme-Asile, Sion, Switzerland (2015); Hales Gallery, London, UK (2017, 2014); Biennale de Dakar, Senegal (2014); Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau, Switzerland (2012) among others. Ba's works can be found in private and public collections, including Credit Suisse, Switzerland; Fonds municipal d'art contemporain de la Ville de Genève, Switzerland; Fonds municipal d'art contemporain de la Ville de Paris; Centre national des arts plastiques, France; and the Barbier-Mueller Collection, Geneva, as well as the Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France, and the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. In 2011, Ba received the Swiss Art Award.