

TEMPLON

II

OMAR BA

MEER, December 12, 2024

# Kaïdara

30 Oct — 21 Dec 2024 at Templon in Paris, France



Omar Ba, Kaïdara, exhibition view. Courtesy of Templon

*Le savoir vrai est pareil à une lumière  
qui vient de haut pour fondre les ténèbres de l'ignorance  
comme l'éclair qui perce le gros nuage lourd  
qui obscurcit et noircit le ciel alentour.  
Pénétrant une âme, il lui assure joie, santé et paix ;  
trois choses que les hommes souhaitent pour eux-mêmes  
et ceux qu'ils aiment...*

*(Kaïdara, verses 2051-2057)*

Omar Ba returns to Paris after a six-year absence with an unprecedented project. Invited by the leading figure of art books in France, Diane de Selliers, Omar Ba illustrates the renowned Peul tale of Kaïdara, as collected and transcribed by the Malian writer Amadou Hampâté Bâ. Omar Ba has dedicated more than a year to the creation of a magnum opus comprising nearly forty works inspired by this now-classic of African literature.

Mirroring the free verse allegorical poem from 1968, the exhibition recounts the story of three traveling companions guided by a mysterious and omniscient voice to the hidden land of the dwarf-spirits. They meet eleven enigmatic figures, including a chameleon, a scorpion and an inexhaustible spring, embodying a philosophical and spiritual significance that encourages them to continue their journey until they finally meet Kaïdara, the god of knowledge and gold. On their return journey the only traveller to survive will be the one who aspires to nothing more than knowledge and has rid himself of his material possessions.

Omar Ba depicts an array of hybrid figures and ancestral references emerging from backgrounds first covered in black, yellow and orange paint. He offers us a poetic cosmogony in an explosion of colours, motifs and textures, subtly translating the mysteries and lessons that pave the path to Kaïdara. The exhibition, far more than a simple illustrative work, gives the artist an opportunity to explore African realities and myths.

**Omar Ba** is one of the African painters whose complex oeuvre has captivated the international contemporary art scene since the 2010s. After studying at the École nationale des beaux-arts in Dakar, he furthered his training in Geneva, Switzerland. His unique style merges African and Western influences in a body of work that explores themes such as international politics, demographic challenges, societal changes, and the environment. Questioning notions of identity and power, his art, often metaphorical and dreamlike, offers a politically engaged perspective on the place of the African continent in today's world.

Omar Ba has taken part in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including the recent *Clin d'œil à Cheikh Anta Diop - Un continent à la recherche de son histoire* (UN headquarters, New York, 2024), *Destins Communs* (La Kunsthalle in Mulhouse, France, 2023), Omar Ba: *Political animals* (Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, USA), *Clin d'œil* (FIAF Gallery, New York, 2022), Omar Ba: *Voyage au-delà de l'illusion* (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 2022), Omar Ba: *Same dream* (Contemporary Calgary, Canada, 2020, Musée des Beaux Arts de Montréal, 2019 and Power Plant Toronto, 2019), *Global(e) resistance* (Musée National d'Art Moderne - Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2020), *Art/Afrique, le nouvel atelier* (Louis Vuitton Foundation, Paris, 2017), the Afropolitan Festival (Bozar, Brussels, 2017), *Afrique-Raconter le Monde* (Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, 2017), *Le Havre - Dakar, Partager la mémoire* \*(*Le Havre Natural History Museum, 2017*), and the \**Summer exhibition* at the Royal Academy of Arts (London) and Biennale of Dakar in 2014 and 2022. His work can also be found in a number of public collections, including at the Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP), Centre Pompidou and Collection Louis Vuitton in Paris, Collection Nationale Suisse in Basel, Switzerland, and the Abu Dhabi Louvre in the United Arab Emirates.