

Paris, 26th February 2021

Dear Friends,

Who would have imagined that the year 2020 would change our lives so dramatically across the globe... As the year 2021 commences, we would like to thank you for your numerous messages of friendship and encouragement, and for the commitment that so many of you have shown to our initiatives during this historic crisis.


On the occasion of the «Artists Party 2020» in Cape Town (South Africa), last February, we were fortunate to have more than 350 African artists and 850 guests at our side, gathered together to celebrate African creation. During this magical evening, which now seems so far away, we presented exceptional works from our collection, and unveiled a work by Asemahle Ntlonti that we commissioned to celebrate this special event. We hope to have the opportunity to meet again in 2022 to celebrate the energy of the artists from the African continent!

The health crisis continues to worsen, and no region has escaped the repeated onslaught of Covid-19. The human consequences across the continent are still very difficult to assess, but it is apparent that the economic and social impact of this pandemic will be immeasurable. In the context of this global crisis, culture and the fine arts have not been spared. The economic model of this sector has been greatly destabilised. All the actors on the art scene are affected, and the first to suffer are the artists themselves, especially emerging artists who have no galleries, institutions or collectors to support them.

Since its creation, the Leridon Collection has been searching on site for emerging artists from different countries on the African continent. As they have not yet penetrated the art market, these artists, with whom we have established trusting relationships, have been hit very hard by this crisis.

As committed collectors, our response to this global crisis has been to support the artists who are experiencing the greatest financial hardship. Starting in March 2020, we set up a programme and relief funds dedicated exclusively to helping emerging artists on the African continent. Our commissions have given nearly fifty of these artists the resources necessary to continue pursuing their creative work.

Throughout 2020, although numerous exhibitions had to be postponed, we continued to lend artworks from our collection. For the flagship exhibition «Mabele Eleki Lola!» dedicated to Freddy Tsimba at the Africa Museum (Tervuren, Belgium), the Leridon Collection lent six major artworks, including *Encore un effort*, a monumental sculpture that was shown to the public for the first time.



The installation *Galaxie, ville du futur* by Rigobert Nimi, commissioned by the Leridon Collection, was also presented to the public for the first time at the Astrup Fearnley Museum (Oslo, Norway) as part of the exhibition «Alpha Crucis», curated by André Magnin. Billie Zangewa's *The Rebirth of the Black Venus*, as well as Nicholas Hlobo's *Nalo ikhwezi alinyulu*, were also exhibited in this context.

The Leridon Collection has never stopped promoted and represented contemporary African art through various initiatives, including providing an artistic grant to Tracy Naa Koshie Thompson to create an original artwork for the 2020 Stellenbosch Triennale (South Africa).

Although we slowed this activity in order to concentrate our efforts on creating an emergency support fund for emerging artists, we have also actively pursued making acquisitions. More than a hundred works by 56 different artists joined our collection in 2020. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to our very numerous gallery friends the world over for their understanding and patience during this time.

We have also continued our ongoing restoration project, which in 2020 involved more than 30 works. The preservation and conservation of our collection are structural components of our collection.

With our 2021 new year's greeting card, we formalised our policy of systematically producing video capsules for each work in the collection. These filmed interviews give the artists a voice and allow them to present their work in an innovative way through these modern and interactive statements.

In order to maintain our personal relationships with the artists in our collection, we have also set up «video calls». These informal conversations led us to the creation of our newsletter, the *#CollectionLeridonChezVous*. Each week during the first lockdown, an artist from our collection was interviewed, thus sharing his or her feelings about this particular time. In addition to sharing their artistic thoughts with us, their works were also featured on our social media platforms.

Malala Andrialavidrazana, Serge Mikpon alias Aston, Wayne Cahill Barker, Stéphané E. Conradie, Willem Boshoff, Georgina Gratrix, Daniel Halter, Eddy Kamuanga, Richard Mudariki, Gonçalo Mabunda, Gideon Mendel, Hassan Musa, Rigobert Nimi, Adjaratou Ouedraogo, Nyaba Ouedraogo, the artists San, Jean-Servais Somian, Géraldine Tobé, Freddy Tsimba, the women from the village of Makwacha, Amina Zoubir and so many others thus helped us to get through this difficult year, making us feel better thanks to their exceptional gazes.

In 2020, we learned to adapt to a world in crisis and transformation. In 2021, we will continue to focus on our main objective: supporting young and emerging artists on the African continent by commissioning works from them.

The Leridon Collection will lend several major artworks as part of the Africa2020 Season: *Electricien* by Calixte Dakpogan at the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris, France) for the exhibition «Africa Reborn», *Homeless* by Jems Robert Koko Bi at l'Atelier (Nantes, France), or the installation *Wish you were here* by Mary Sibande for the exhibition «Memoria, accounts of another History» at the FRAC MÉCA (Bordeaux, France).

We will lend six artworks created by Willem Boshoff for his solo exhibition «Word Woes» at the Javett-UP Art Center (Pretoria, South Africa), including *Prison Sentences*, an installation composed of eight granite panels, and *Letter L*, commissioned for our collection. On this occasion, we will also help finance the publication of Willem Boshoff's first monographic catalogue.

Within the framework of the second edition of BISO (Biennale Internationale de Sculpture in Ouagadougou), we will once again give the Leridon Prize, an artistic grant awarded by an independent jury to a sculptor whose work is presented at the Biennale.

Finally, if permitted by the health and safety measures in 2021, we ambition to open the first «Leridon Residency», a residency program for an African photographer in partnership with the Maison Européenne de la Photographie (MEP, Paris, France).

As you have understood, in 2021 we will remain committed to artists who think about the world, who enlighten it, question it and liberate it. More than ever, we will be the defenders of the fact that Africa is the continent of tomorrow!

Africa is the future!

With our warmest and most artistic greetings,

Gervanne and Matthias Leridon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gervanne', with a stylized flourish above it.