

Press kit

Frac Île-de-France

Le Plateau, Paris

Ndayé Kouagou

A Change of Perspective

21.09.23–18.02.24

Tuesday 19th September

Press visit: 12 noon

Wednesday 20th September

Opening: 6-9pm

Curator:

Céline Poulin



A Coin is a Coin, 2022 © Ndayé Kouagou

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The Frac Île-de-France is supported by the Île-de-France Region, the Ministry of Culture - Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles d'Île-de-France and the City of Paris. Member of the Tram network, of Platform, a grouping of FRACs and of Grand Belleville.

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Press release

From 21 September 2023 to 18 February 2024, the Frac Île-de-France presents at Le Plateau the 1st solo exhibition in France (in an institution) by Ndayé Kouagou. Ndayé Kouagou's different practices revolve around language without establishing any hierarchy between them. From the tangible form of a painting to videos evoking the world of influencers, to the intimate and ephemeral nature of performances and workshops, his work gives equal consideration to transmission via objects, performances and educational formats. Engaging with the other is central to his need to create. A self-taught artist, his work is driven by a desire for dialogue and openness, a yearning to allow others to dream for themselves. In this sense, his work is like that of the social network influencers who seek to inspire us with energy and willpower, telling us to "Be yourself!"

Really?

No, not really, because Ndayé Kouagou's lyrics seem to lose us and guide us at the same time, leaving plenty of room for doubt.

I'm in favour of a Manichean vision of everything! A simple division of things, whether good or bad, yes or no. Something simple. For me it's more of a dream than anything else. I'm a doubting person, doubt never leaves me. For example, I'm not sure I want a simple division of things. I'm not sure of the good or bad of this Manichean division applied to everything. But despite everything I wish it from the bottom of my heart.¹

It's hard to tell whether the artist's style is extremely deep or superficial, serious or ironic? Asked about this elusive style of writing, the artist replies that his aim is to give the audience time. **Not to give messages that will be quickly digested, but to sow seeds that will then inhabit the mind and grow.** This leaves the interpretation open, offering a degree of freedom but also a sense of lightness. This play with Manichaeism and a binary view of the world permeates all Ndayé Kouagou's work. In his view, we all aspire to things that are simple and precise, but if we are faced with a binary choice, our brains get stuck. In one of his latest public performances, the artist encouraged the audience to divide themselves into two camps: the extraordinary people had to go to one side, and the average and/or meagre people had to go to the other. A choice that is both impossible and ridiculous, highlighting the difficulty of defining oneself. Every word spoken by the artist is imbued with a memory that is both personal and collective, and which is amplified and modified by the person who interprets the work. Ndayé Kouagou films himself and not other people but **the principle remains the same: a fictional character**

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enabling a link of “self to self, self to other, self to group”, to address all audiences, whatever

their background. There is a search for accessibility in his work. While the narrative conveyed by Ndayé Kouagou represents an alternative to binary media information (good/evil, them/us), particularly through his unwavering commitment to doubt, **his work** is nonetheless **directly inspired by marketing and communication theories.** “I work with text; I know the limits of text. Marketing has taught me how to make text attractive [...] It’s the nature of our age, image is stronger than text. I’m not sickened, disgusted or nostalgic, it’s a question of form”².

And in this, **Ndayé Kouagou is resolutely pop. Like pop art, Kouagou appropriates the tools that create the dominant aesthetic of his time.** By appropriating these technical tools (Tik-Tok, YouTube, Instagram, etc.), Ndayé Kouagou updates pop art, like other artists of his generation (Sara Sadik, for example). **By using popular formats, Ndayé Kouagou draws on the codes of personal development to propose a new form of metaphysics of being that speaks directly to us, the public, encouraging us to take our place in the complexity of the world.**

This ownership of content creation tools is offered to the public, with the installation of a space for conversation integrated into the exhibition. Defined by the Frac’s new project, this space for free practice immediately appealed to the artist, who wanted to integrate it directly into his itinerary and make it a participatory work. **The exhibition opens and closes with an area of activity for everyone, where a question-and-answer game will be played, reflecting the range of doubts generated by the constant pressure to evaluate.**

Born in Montreuil in 1992, author, performer and video artist Ndayé Kouagou lives in Le Perreux-sur-Marne. Self-taught, he entered the contemporary art scene first as a writer, then as a performer. Young Black Romantics is the pseudonym he uses on social networks. Emblematic of the artists of his generation, Ndayé Kouagou does not establish a hierarchy between his different practices, which revolve around writing and language.

He has presented his work at Auto Italia South East (London), Wiels (Brussels), Centrale Fies (Dro/Italy), Centre Pompidou and Lafayette Anticipations (Paris), where he also launched his YBR (*Young Black Romantics*) publishing project. In April 2023, he presented his project *The Guru* at the Fondation Louis Vuitton (Paris). Ndayé Kouagou is represented by Nir Altman (Munich).

¹ Ndayé Kouagou, extract from *Petit comme moi* (2023)

² Extract from an interview between the artist and the curator

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Notes

Free practice area

Ndayé Kouagou's practice is based on interacting with the public, taking over the Plateau's new free practice space to create a workshop as part of his exhibition.

A tablet programme available at the reception desk allows visitors to write messages to which the artist can reply in real-time or later. From this collection of messages, the artist will select fragments of this online conversation. A number of these questions and their potential answers will then be printed and hung on the dedicated section of the wall, giving visitors a voice and a real opportunity to interact. This ambiguous exchange, between presence and absence, is reminiscent of artificial intelligence chatbots, which re-articulate the data they have been made to assimilate. The question of 'who is speaking', of the sender, is very prominent in Ndayé Kouagou's work.

I Le Choix (The Choice)

An installation in the whole of the first room revolves around the work *Good People TV*. Opposite us, a television screen is showing a video. Throughout the video, Internet culture images, emojis and text extracts illustrate and/or emphasise his speech. He creates a double of himself. A female voice – used in all his videos – blurs the character's identity, so that as many people as possible can identify with it.

Ndayé Kouagou draws a great deal of his inspiration from the new media at the root of the digital culture in which he grew up. He presents *Good People TV* in a setting reminiscent of a living room, where the only thing on television is his fictional programme. He has a thorough command of the communication and marketing tools used by brands and the worlds of advertising and fashion. In addition, he works with professionals in direct contact with these sectors (art director, stylist, make-up artist). Through these references to advertisement, the artist creates a common frame of reference that influences the way the work is interpreted and strengthens the bond between visitors. The use of these everyday codes creates a sense of familiarity in a space that is nonetheless new.

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II Le Coin (The Corner)

The installation *Will You Feel Comfortable in My Corner?* consists of a video, seating and nine two-dimensional works in fabric and resin framed in metal. Ndayé Kouagou stands out from the grey background and addresses us directly. Certain excerpts from the speech are superimposed on the image of the artist as if to assert his ideas. Here he addresses the notions of vulnerability, universality and legitimacy. These writings are the transcription of a raw feeling, of a tentative thought that sometimes seems to be in the process of being constructed. Through this sharing, his reflections become the basis for group discussion. With this simple question in the title of the work, and repeated several times, Ndayé Kouagou encourages us to enter his space. A private, comfortable refuge that he makes public. Can this private space be shared? If it is shared, is it still his spot? Does his private spot resemble those of others? Ndayé Kouagou tackles these issues with humour and irony.

IIIa Le Monde (The world)

A Coin is a Coin consists of a two-part video, an aluminium fresco and paintings in plexiglass, fabric and resin. The character looks straight into the lens and talks to us, asking us questions and giving us advice that isn't really advice at all. The language seems both full and empty of meaning. His character is deliberately ambiguous and contradictory, striving to be transparent and yet undermining our certainties. Is this the voice of the artist himself or a more general voice, a sort of collective expression of our contemporary society, particularly that of the influencers and the new well-being gurus? Ndayé Kouagou does not seek to offer real advice or solutions. He just casts doubt on our convictions.

IIIb Le Changement (The Change)

The video *A Change of Perspective* is projected across the entire wall of the room, showing Ndayé Kouagou full-length, almost life-size. His character, though virtual, seems very present. He engages in dialogue with a hypothetical audience and progresses through his questions using this question-and-answer game, going around in circles and contradicting himself. Ndayé Kouagou changes outfits four times as if to mark the progress of his thoughts with humour and lightness. Clothes play an important role in his work, as demonstrated by his collaboration with the stylist Ally Macrae. This attention to clothing and full-length framing brings him closer to the field of performance art, while the video aesthetic is reminiscent of social networks and *YouTube*, addressing audiences directly, editing, and using memes and typography. The questions posed in *A Change of Perspective* show the extent to which our views

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and opinions are shaped by the roles we play. The artist shifts and disguises this political issue by adopting the codes of personal development. He offers a metaphorical change of perspective, like a demonstration, an explanatory experiment. The idea is to move from the corner towards the centre. But this change is double-edged: he is now the centre of attention, he shines, but from the centre, he sees everything, especially what he didn't want to see.

IV La Pensée (The Thought)

Small like me is an installation made up of eight texts presented in frames hanging from the ceiling. This installation reflects the signage that can be found in public spaces, offering solutions that can be applied to our lives. The texts refer to the language of advertising, well-being and personal development, which are proposed as solutions for life.

The artist feigns naivety and confusion, expressing his innermost thoughts on existential subjects. In an a priori dual form, the artist invites us to explore the complex ways in which our beliefs and thoughts are shaped. Where is our good faith, and his?

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Project Room



The Project Room is the Frac's new prospective and experimental space, located in the last room of the Plateau. It offers the opportunity to present research, diploma, grant and residency projects to French and foreign artists, preferably from the Île de France region. This reactive and flexible programming is also built in dialogue with the essential structures supporting creation, and particularly young creation, but also art schools and universities in the Paris region or internationally.

Parisa Babaei

Is you is, or is you ain't (my baby)?

21.09 – 05.11.23

Curator : Maëlle Dault



Parisa Babaei, *The Point of no Return*, 2023 © Parisa Babaei

Parisa Babaei was born in Teheran, Iran in 1992. She lives and works in Paris (Bobigny and Pantin).

Inspired by her Iranian and French cultures, her work is mainly based on compositions that combine writing in different languages, common and poor materials, and images or objects from popular culture, all of which can be reproduced in completely original ways in a variety of contexts.

Using visual associations and mise en abyme, her installations combine objects, photographs, editions, videos, texts and sound archives, humorously revealing the hidden meaning of a personal political history. The diversity of universes is enriched by analogy or visual correspondences, creating a poetic absurdity that reveals a kind of “social surrealism”.

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Photos available



A Coin is a Coin, 2022 © Ndayé Kouagou



Will you feel comfortable in my corner, 2022 © Ndayé Kouagou



A Coin is a Coin, 2022 © Ndayé Kouagou



A Change of Perspective, 2022 © Ndayé Kouagou



Parisa Babaei, The Point of no Return, 2023 © Parisa Babaei

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Rendez-vous*

Opening of the exhibition

20.09, 6-9pm

Cross visits Plateau/ Magasins généraux

07.10.23

Around Ndayé Kouagou's work. Meet at the Magasins généraux at 2pm, then second part of the tour at Le Plateau from 4pm.

Artist/curator visit

04.02.24 at 5pm

With Ndayé Kouagou and Céline Poulin.

WE FRAC 2023 (Frac Weekend)

Two-way tour with Marlène Diard, digital content creator, around the exhibition A Change of Perspective by Ndayé Kouagou
19.11.23 at 4pm

This two-voice visit with our mediator and influencer @aartemisartworks will offer another approach to the works of Ndayé Kouagou, whose messages to the public are reminiscent of the injunctions to happiness delivered on social networks.

The nocturnes

Open until 9pm

Every 1st Wednesday of the month, with a tour of the exhibition at 7.30pm.

Guided tours

Every Sunday at 4pm

Meet at reception.

Children's rendez-vous*

Affiche-moi ton talent ! (Display your talent)

Cycle of 4 sessions for 6-10 years old

Wednesdays 13.09, 20.09, 27.09, 04.10
2:30 – 4:30pm

Artist workshop

Nina Chalot

2 days for 6-10 year olds

Monday and Tuesday 23-24.10
10 – 12am & 2 – 4:30pm

Transforme ta parole en œuvre d'art ! (Turn your words into a work of art)

Saturdays 14.10 / 18.11 / 16.12 / 20.01
2:30 – 4:30pm

* Free on inscription: 01 76 21 13 45 or on plateau@fraciledefrance.com

* Free

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Practical informations

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Entrée libre

Access by the subways : Jourdain or Buttes-Chaumont / Bus : line 26

Wednesday to sunday from 2pm to 7pm

Nocturne until 9pm every 1st wednesday of the month

Free admission

L'antenne culturelle

22 cours du 7^{ème} art (50 m from du Plateau)

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Phone: +33 1 76 21 13 45

Open during the week, by appointment, for consultation of the documentary collection (books, periodicals and videos). The cultural centre is closed on public holidays.

President of the Frac Île-de-France: Béatrice Lecouturier

Director of the Frac Île-de-France : Céline Poulin

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