

# AIMÉ MPANE

July 9 - August 31, 2013



**Panel Discussion:**

Tuesday, July 9, 2013,  
5:30pm to 7:30pm  
with Diane Frankel, Museum  
consultant with Management  
Consultants for the Arts;  
Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins, Curator,  
Museum of African Diaspora and  
Lawrence Rinder, Director, UC  
Berkeley Art Museum

**Opening Reception:**

Thursday, July 11, 2013,  
5:30pm to 7:30pm

Haines Gallery is pleased to present the first West Coast solo exhibition of multidisciplinary Congolese artist, Aimé Mpane. While he was raised and received his BFA in his native Congo, he went on to study in Europe at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Visuels in Belgium; he continues to split his time between these two countries. Using the figure and human expressions as his primary subject matter, Mpane investigates the lingering effects of the Belgian Congo's traumatic colonial history and how the collision of these two cultures reveals itself today.

Mpane's rough-hewn portraits explore the fundamental connection between place and personal identity. Using plywood glued in layers and finished with an adze – an edging tool that dates to the Stone Age – he produces topographies of the human face reminiscent of relief depictions on a map. This layering reveals contour lines over forms that allude both formally and stylistically to African masks, but also reference Cubism – rooted in an interest in Primitivism – by incorporating bright colors and bold patterns.

This aesthetic juxtaposition is epitomized by Mpane's recent series, *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, an homage to the unforgettable Picasso painting of 1907. His interpretation depicts seven female prostitutes with twisted noses and mouths typical of Pende medicine masks. Often rendered in black and white, these masks are used to ward off illness and other evil forces. Mpane pays tribute to Picasso with an icon from his own cultural past, using it to comment on difficult present-day realities in the Congo. Installed perpendicular to the gallery walls, these paintings transform our relationship to the canvas by creating two viewing positions and revealing what is usually hidden. On the reverse of the panels, each layer is defined by its own exuberant color. These dual-sided works prompt us to reflect on what might be lost or hidden in the process of representation.

Three murals are comprised of wooden squares snapped and woven together in a contemporary vision of Pointillism. Though addressing materials differently in these large works, the expressive character of his figures is again unmistakable and highlighted by his adept use of color. Each

piece is imbued with a sense of fragility while elevating the faces of his expressive young subjects to a monumental scale. These large-scale works seem to float off the wall, emanating reflective fluorescent shadows from their day-glow painted backs.

Mpane's work has been collected by public and private institutions in Africa, Europe and the United States including The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Fondation Jean-Paul Blachère, Apt, France; and National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Exhibitions of the artist's work have been held at Museum of Katanga Lubumbashi, DR Congo; Fondation d'art contemporain Francès, Paris, France; Glazenhuis Amstelpark, Amsterdam; and Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Houston, TX. In 2006, he was the recipient of the Prix de la Fondation Jean-Paul Blachère at the Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal and was later presented with the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Award in 2012. He will be included in the upcoming exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *Shaping Power: Luba Masterworks From The Royal Museum For Central Africa*.



Aimé Mpane's dual-sided painting *La Demoiselle Pende / Masque Bi-face Picasso-Pende #6*, 2013  
Mixed media on board, 12.5 x 12 inches