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Gagosian to Present Works by Romuald Hazoumè in Athens

Opening on March 11, *Les fleurs du mâle* Is the Artist's First Exhibition in Greece



Romuald Hazoumè, *Les fleurs du mâle*, 2024, plastic, fishing nets, and copper, 14 1/4 x 14 1/4 x 7 7/8 inches (36 x 36 x 20 cm) © Romuald Hazoumè, ADAGP 2025. Photo: Thomas Lannes

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ATHENS, February 25, 2025—Gagosian is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by Romuald Hazoumè. Working across numerous mediums, Hazoumè engages with the postcolonial legacies and contemporary realities that define his native Benin. *Les fleurs du mâle* is the artist's first exhibition in Greece and features paintings, sculptures, and photographs produced over the past two decades.

Hazoumè transforms discarded industrial objects into anthropomorphic sculptural assemblages. In sculptures of singular masks, he composes plastic containers and appliance parts into faces, and nylon, fishing nets, feathers, and additional materials into hair, clothing, and other markers of style and individuality. In doing so, he draws on Yoruba culture and pan-African traditions, evoking their sacred and performative significance while bringing a critical gaze to the enduring global fascination with African mask-making.

The incisive visual reconfigurations of these works are complemented by the wordplay of their titles. The exhibition's title, *Les fleurs du mâle*, hinges on the distinction between *mal* (evil—alluding to Charles Baudelaire's 1847 volume of poetry, *Les fleurs du mal*) and *mâle* (male). As Hazoumè remarks: "Many of the problems in the world today are created by men. The wars and current conflicts are caused by men who do harm to their people. And we are supposed to agree with them, to consider their insults and their bombs as flowers. But they are not flowers."

Two sculptures, *ZoCooter* and *Bunkely* (both 2019), repurpose scooters used for trafficking contraband gasoline from neighboring Nigeria, an economic necessity in Benin. The artist has transformed the vehicles, welding on additional metal elements and large glass *dame-jeanne* vessels of the sort once commonly used to store and sell fuel (since largely replaced by plastic containers). The material contrasts between the brute strength of metal and the fragility of glass serve as a metaphor for this risky trade, and more broadly for life itself. Hazoumè's photographs document the ingenuity and desperation of those who deliver this fuel, precariously stacking as many canisters as possible onto scooters and bicycles. The images complement the sculptures, grounding their economic and ecological ramifications as objects of trade and survival.

Hazoumè's paintings exhibited in *Les fleurs du mâle* draw their forms from *Fâ*—sacred symbols and systems of knowledge that have been developed over centuries by Yoruba-speaking people. Simple forms that are rich in meaning, these icons are at times shared by other peoples of West Africa and beyond. The vertical line in the center of *Homme vivant* (2009) represents a living man, standing upright. *Vibration* and *Le son* (both 2015) interpret sonic wavelengths of music within colorful compositions that offer vibrant contemporary interpretations of traditions that are both ancient and alive.

Romuald Hazoumè was born in 1962 in Porto Novo, Benin, where he lives and works. Collections include Musée Barbier-Mueller, Geneva; Neue Galerie, Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Germany; Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; British Museum, London; Fondation Zinsou, Cotonou, Benin; Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; and Museum of Modern Art, New York. Exhibitions include *La Bouche du Roi*, Menil Collection, Houston (2005, traveled to Musée du quai Branly, Paris, 2006, British Museum, London, 2007, and institutions throughout the United Kingdom, 2007–09); *ARTicle 14, Romuald Hazoumè*, World Museum, Liverpool, England (2006); *My Paradise—Made in Porto Novo*, Herbert Gerisch-Stiftung, Neumünster, Germany (2010); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2011); *Beninese Solidarity with Endangered Westerners*, Kunsthau Graz, Austria (2013–14); *Dance of the Butterflies*, Manchester Museum, England (2015); *Expression(s) décoloniale(s) #2*, Château des Ducs de Bretagne, Nantes, France (2021); and *The Fâ Series*, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York (2023–24).

Hazoumè has participated in the Biennale de Lyon and Gwangju Biennale (both 2000), the Third Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art at the Garage Center for Contemporary Culture (2009), and the 60th Biennale di Venezia (2024). He was awarded the Arnold Bode Prize for his participation in documenta 12 (2007).

#RomualdHazoume

ROMUALD HAZOUMÈ

Les fleurs du mâle

Opening reception: Tuesday, March 11, 6–8pm

March 11–April 26, 2025

22 Anapiron Polemou Street, Athens

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