

**MESCHAC GABA**

April 26 – June 7, 2014

Galleries 1 & 2

For immediate release

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is very pleased to present its first solo exhibition with Meschac Gaba. Titled *Exchange Market*, this show is the artist's first one-person gallery presentation in the United States.

Since the late-1990's, Gaba has closely examined constructions of cultural identity as they relate to exchanges between Africa and the Western world. Inspired by his own experiences living between the Netherlands and Benin, his birthplace in West Africa, the artist's work questions codes of identity and value by playfully restructuring relationships between "first" and "third" worlds, the local and the global, art and the everyday. At once critical and lighthearted, his approach invites viewers to look beyond established systems and hierarchies and consider a new way of thinking and acting globally, one hinging on practices of adaptation and collaboration rather than on conformity.

Within the ground floor gallery, Gaba's new ten-table installation titled *Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]* applies these practices of adaptation to systems of cultural and economic value. Reminiscent of marketplace stands, each table presents a different collection of symbolic objects and raw materials – gold-covered stones and hand tools, cotton bolls, devalued African banknotes and smart phones, among other items connected to money – all carefully arranged under salvaged umbrella frames. Incorporating devalued currency as both a medium and symbol, these works reflect Africa's struggling economies within the broader exchanges and dependencies between today's developed and underdeveloped worlds, a fractured reality symbolized here by the shadeless parasols. More fundamentally, each display critiques underlying principals of value at play in global relationships, hinting at the ways in which value is ascribed and, as evidenced by Gaba's evocative collections, has the potential to be renegotiated.

Also presented in the downstairs exhibition space is a new series of wall-mounted and freestanding coin banks. Known as *bankivi* in a mixed French-Mina dialect, these works take the shapes of culturally significant figures and animals, some referencing logos of African and Western banks, others emblems of causes and resources. While reminiscent of fundraising displays like UNICEF or UNESCO donation boxes found in airports, Gaba's banks are not meant for aid or charity, but rather for savings. Through individual contribution and collective investment, these works reveal an equality and unity that comes with a shared aspiration for a better world.

Themes of collaboration and belonging also play out in the artist's latest series of table games installed in the upstairs gallery space. Building on his longtime work with recreational activities and interactive games, Gaba's new project brings together four coin-operated soccer tables, each handmade in Benin. While mimicking the design of European models, these versions deviate from the traditional setup and sleek, manufactured aesthetic of Western tables. Here, painted fields and figures reveal teams of mixed races, nationalities and religions, many symbolically reconfigured as single-team, single-goal tables. Through teamwork and collective strategy, Gaba's games of globalization offer viewers the opportunity to become part of the collaborative exchanges and unified systems they represent, all driven by mutual interests, goals and values.

In the adjacent gallery, a playfully patriotic billiard game similarly reorients codes of nationality. Titled *Iran*, this work takes the form of a miniature pool table painted in the colors of the nation's flag and includes a rack of snooker balls and cues. Nearby, other flag-covered objects appear along the walls and floor, arranged on top of wooden pallets resembling those found in West African markets. Referencing the commodification of nationalist symbols alongside systems of trade, this display questions the inherent value of these symbols as contexts shift from the political to the artistic to the everyday. Here, powerful indicators of identity and global politics become indistinguishable from painting, game and souvenir.

[continued ...]

Born in Cotonou, Benin in 1961, Gaba has presented major works at the *50th Venice Biennial* (2003) and at *Documenta 11* (2002), among other key exhibitions worldwide. In 2013, Tate Modern acquired and exhibited his major installation, *Museum of Contemporary African Art* (1997-2002), a project consisting of twelve interactive “rooms” of a nomadic museum. Recent group presentations include *The Invisible Hand: Curating as Gesture*, 2nd CAFAM Biennale, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing (2014); *Geestverwanten (Kindred Spirits)*, Rabo Art Collection, Utrecht, The Netherlands (2013-2014); *Station to Station* organized by Doug Aitken (2013), *When Attitudes Became Form Become Attitudes: A Restoration / A Remake / A Rejuvenation / A Rebellion*, CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2012), and *Intense Proximity: La Triennale 2012*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2012 (group).



Meschac Gaba's exhibition is supported as part of the Dutch Culture USA program by the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York.

**Meschac Gaba  
Exchange Market  
April 26-June 7, 2014**

**Main Gallery**



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Diamond*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, plastic diamonds  
table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm  
umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
(TBG 15723)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Stone*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, stones, gold plated rocks, brick pieces  
table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm  
umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
(TBG 15728)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Electronics*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, binderclips, cell phones, laptop, iPhone box, cell phone battery  
table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm  
umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
(TBG 15722)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Architecture*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, rubberbands, architectural souvenirs  
table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm  
umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
(TBG 15725)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Brain, Stone*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, electroplated gold brain, rocks and brick pieces  
table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm  
umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm  
(TBG 15720)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Art*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, rubberbands, framed Monet print, ceramic statue table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm (TBG 15726)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Cotton*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, cotton stocks table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm (TBG 15724)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Cocoa*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, cocoa pods table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm (TBG 15727)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Labor*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, paperclips, electroplated gold hand tools table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm (TBG 15721)



Meschac GABA  
*Bureau d'échange [Exchange Office]: Brick, Rock*  
2014

Wood table, metal umbrella frame, assorted banknotes, clothespins, gold electroplated rock table; 32 1/4 x 53 x 29 1/2 inches; 81.9 x 134.6 x 74.9 cm umbrella; 73 1/2 x 80 x 80 inches; 186.7 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm overall; 84 x 80 x 80 inches 213.4 x 203.2 x 203.2 cm (TBG 15729)



Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Housing Bank*  
2014  
Wood, decommissioned Central African (CFA) franc banknotes,  
plexiglas, assorted coins  
26 x 19 5/8 x 1 inches; 66 x 50 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15600)



Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Agriculture Bank*  
2014  
Wood, plexiglas, assorted coins  
41 3/8 x 21 5/8 x 1 inches; 105 x 55 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15607)



Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Solar Energy Bank*  
2014  
Wood, decommissioned Central African (CFA) franc banknotes,  
plexiglas, assorted coins  
24 7/8 x 24 7/8 x 1 inches; 63 x 63 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15602)



Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Workers' Bank*  
2014  
Wood, decommissioned Central African (CFA) franc banknotes,  
plexiglas, assorted coins  
38 1/2 x 14 1/8 x 1 inches; 98 x 36 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15604)



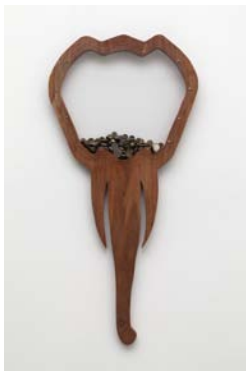
Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: AIDS Bank*  
2014  
Wood, decommissioned Central African (CFA) franc banknotes,  
plexiglas, assorted coins  
32 1/4 x 15 x 1 inches; 82 x 38 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15590)



Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Sesame Bank*  
2014  
Wood, plexiglas, assorted coins  
30 3/4 x 20 7/8 x 1 inches; 78 x 53 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15601)

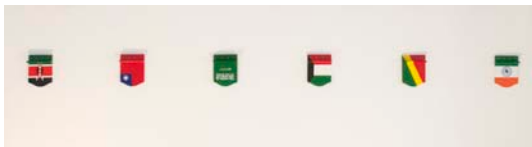


Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Lion Bank*  
2014  
Wood, decommissioned Central African (CFA) franc banknotes, plexiglas, assorted coins  
34 1/4 x 17 3/8 x 1 inches; 87 x 44 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15606)

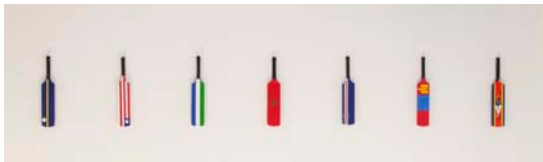


Meschac GABA  
*Bankivi: Ivorian Bank*  
2014  
Wood, plexiglas, assorted coins  
39 3/8 x 19 1/4 x 1 inches; 100 x 49 x 2.5 cm  
(TBG 15603)

## Upstairs Galleries



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Key racks  
2014  
12 key racks; wood, oil paint, brass key hooks  
7 7/8 x 5 7/8 x 1 3/4 inches; 20 x 14.9 x 4.4 cm (each key rack)  
(TBG 15756)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Cricket bats  
2014  
7 cricket bats; oil paint on wood  
16 1/4 x 3 x 1/2 inches; 41.3 x 7.6 x 1.3 cm (each cricket bat)  
(TBG 15757)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Small box 1  
2014  
oil paint on paper board  
3 1/8 x 14 5/8 x 9 5/8 inches; 7.9 x 37.1 x 24.4 cm  
(TBG 15759)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Small box 2  
2014  
oil paint on paper board  
3 1/8 x 14 5/8 x 9 5/8 inches; 7.9 x 37.1 x 24.4 cm  
(TBG 15760)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Small box 3  
2014  
oil paint on paper board  
3 1/8 x 14 5/8 x 9 5/8 inches; 7.9 x 37.1 x 24.4 cm  
(TBG 15761)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Letter holder 3  
2014  
oil paint on wood  
4 x 8 x 3 inches; 10.2 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm  
(TBG 15752)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Letter holder 2  
2014  
oil paint on wood  
4 x 8 x 3 inches; 10.2 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm  
(TBG 15751)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Letter holder 1  
2014  
oil paint on wood  
4 x 8 x 3 inches; 10.2 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm  
(TBG 15750)





Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Letter holder 6  
2014  
oil paint on wood  
4 x 8 x 3 inches; 10.2 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm  
(TBG 15755)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Letter holder 5  
2014  
oil paint on wood  
4 x 8 x 3 inches; 10.2 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm  
(TBG 15754)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Letter holder 4  
2014  
oil paint on wood  
4 x 8 x 3 inches; 10.2 x 20.3 x 7.6 cm  
(TBG 15753)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Coin canister 6  
2014  
oil paint on metal  
8 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches in diameter; 22.2 x 15.6 cm  
(TBG 15749)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Coin canister 5  
2014  
oil paint on metal  
8 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches in diameter; 22.2 x 15.6 cm  
(TBG 15748)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Coin canister 4  
2014  
oil paint on metal  
8 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches in diameter; 22.2 x 15.6 cm  
(TBG 15747)





Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Coin canister 3  
2014  
oil paint on metal  
8 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches in diameter; 22.2 x 15.6 cm  
(TBG 15746)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Coin canister 2  
2014  
oil paint on metal  
8 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches in diameter; 22.2 x 15.6 cm  
(TBG 15745)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Coin canister 1  
2014  
oil paint on metal  
8 3/4 x 6 1/8 inches in diameter; 22.2 x 15.6 cm  
(TBG 15744)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Large box 3  
2014  
wood, metal, elastic, oil paint  
8 7/8 x 15 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches; 22.5 x 38.7 x 29.8 cm  
(TBG 15742)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Large box 4  
2014  
wood, metal, elastic, oil paint  
8 7/8 x 15 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches; 22.5 x 38.7 x 29.8 cm  
(TBG 15743)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Large box 2  
2014  
wood, metal, elastic, oil paint  
8 7/8 x 15 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches; 22.5 x 38.7 x 29.8 cm  
(TBG 15741)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Large box 1  
2014  
wood, metal, elastic, oil paint  
8 7/8 x 15 1/4 x 11 3/4 inches; 22.5 x 38.7 x 29.8 cm  
(TBG 15740)



Meschac GABA  
Unity  
2014  
foosball table; oil paint, wood, metal and plastic  
36 5/8 x 59 x 29 3/4 inches; 93 x 150 x 75.5 cm  
(TBG 15585)



Meschac GABA  
United Nations  
2014  
foosball table; oil paint, wood, metal and plastic  
36 5/8 x 59 x 29 3/4 inches; 93 x 150 x 75.5 cm  
(TBG 15584)



Meschac GABA  
Collaboration  
2014  
foosball table; oil paint, wood, metal and plastic  
36 5/8 x 59 x 29 3/4 inches; 93 x 150 x 75.5 cm  
(TBG 15582)



Meschac GABA  
Globo-loco  
2014  
foosball table; oil paint, wood, metal and plastic  
36 5/8 x 59 x 29 3/4 inches; 93 x 150 x 75.5 cm  
(TBG 15583)



Meschac GABA  
Souvenir Palace: Iran  
2010  
billiard table; oil paint, wood, metal and plastic  
32 1/4 x 71 1/4 x 37 7/8 inches; 81.9 x 181 x 96.2 cm  
(TBG 15581)