

## BLOG

## 8 African Artists to Know at The Armory Show

By *Beckett Mufson* — Mar 3 2016

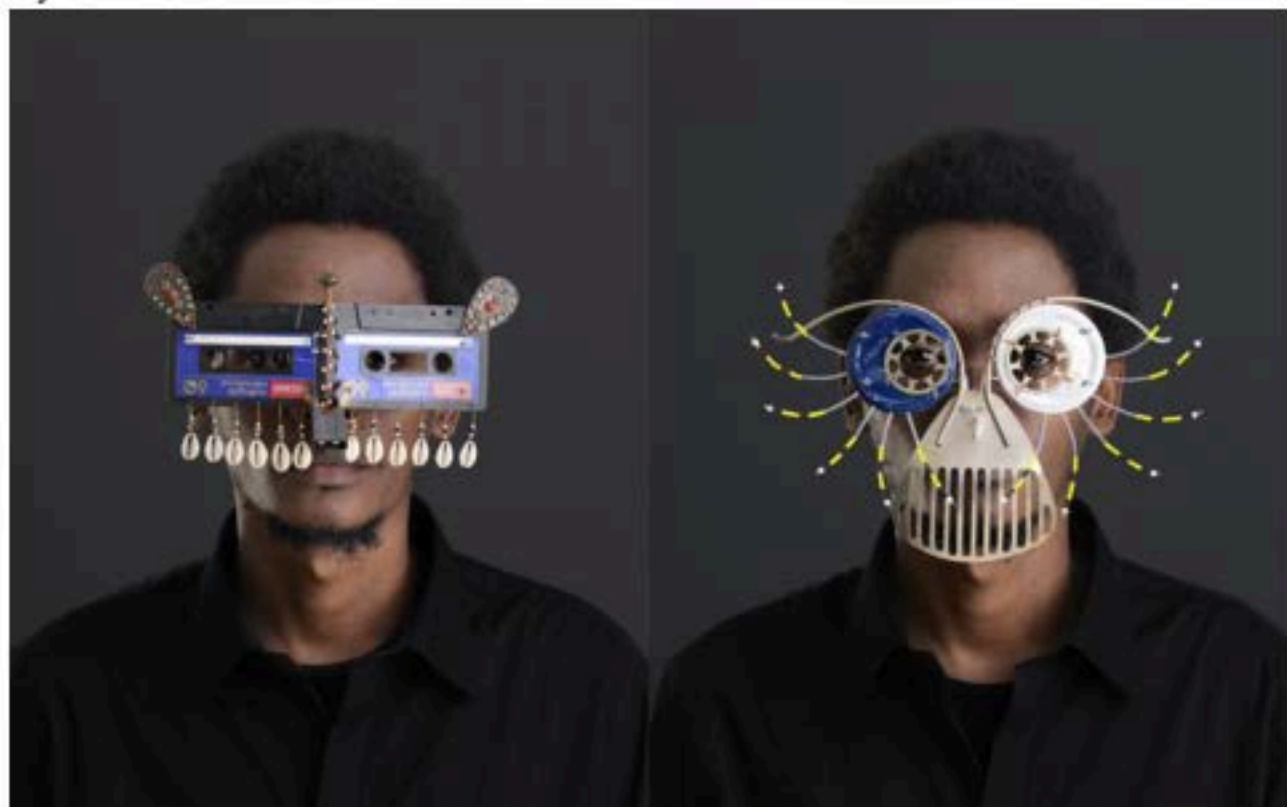
*Eddy Kamuanga Ilunga, Titre Lost, 2015, acrylic and oil on canvas, 200x200cm. Image courtesy October Gallery, London. Photo: the artist*

This week, the chorus of frenzied art world posturing known as [The Armory Show](#) attracts hundreds of artists, galleries, and collectors from all over the world, like sharks swooping in on the smell of fresh blood. Teetering on the westernmost edge of Manhattan, hundreds of booths and thousands of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and experiences fill up the massive warehouse space of Piers 92 and 94. Within the cacophonous labyrinth of art objects vying for human attention, however, there are enough genuinely interesting artifacts to justify a visit, particularly within The Armory Show's *Focus: African Perspectives - Spotighting Artistic Practices of Global Contemporaries*.

This focus takes form as a ring of galleries on the border of the two piers, and features work ranging from plastic bag tapestries and line drawings that evoke Picasso, to men and women infected with circuit boards and Afrofuturist masks reclaimed from garbage. These challenging artworks season our American mixing-pot with the genuine stories of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Sudan, and Angola. They elicit empathy, make familiar the unknown, yet remain refreshingly unpretentious. These are artists with real problems, and the way they deal with them is through creativity and art. Even outside the dedicated African focus area, African artworks stand out from the rest, such as Mary Sibande's surreal, sculptural photographs and Wim Botha's busts sculpted from lacerated books.

Here are eight of the most alluring, challenging, fascinating, and straight up good African artists you've got to check out at The 2016 Armory Show.

## Cyrus Kabiru



(L to R)Cyrus Kabiru, *Throwback*, 2015, Medium Pigment Ink on HP Premium Satin Photographic Paper, Image: SMAC Gallery, South Africa;

Cyrus Kabiru, *Trump*, 2015, Medium Pigment Ink on HP Premium Satin Photographic Paper, Image: SMAC Gallery, South Africa

Known as an advocate of Afrofuturism, Kenyan artist [Cyrus Kabiru](#) offers stunning photography of himself in a series of improvised masks made from garbage and spare metal, which he calls "C-Stunners" (the C is for Cyrus). Part performance, part fashion, part fine art, the photo series is called *Nija Ya Maisha*, which is Swahili for "Ways of Life." His booth was handing out balloons that read "Your Mom," but Armory Show officials made them stop.

Look for Cyrus Kabiru at the [Smac Gallery](#) booth in Pier 94.

## Namsa Leuba



(L to R) Namsa Leuba, *Rasheed NGL*, 2015; Namsa Leuba, *Sarah NGL*, 2015. Photos courtesy Echo Art

Working with local fashion designers of her home base in Lagos, Nigeria, Swiss-Guinean artist [Namsa Leuba](#) presents photography electrified with vivid colors and eye-catching outfits in her new series *NGL*, debuting at The Armory Show. Composed with auteur level attention to detail, she explores the symbolism and rituals of her cultural heritage, both European and African. The result is a fusion of styles and ideas that would look at home on a net artist's Tumblr, infused with a panache that is clearly African.

Look for Namsa Leuba at the [Echo Art Gallery](#) booth in Pier 94.

## Dan Halter



*Dan Halter, V for Vendetta, African masks, dimensions variable, 2014. Image courtesy Tiwandi Gallery*

One of many Zimbabwean immigrants living in South Africa, [Dan Halter's](#) work at The Armory Show is centered around the concept of migration. With tapestries and a massive sculpture stitched together from large plastic bags used to carry valuables across the Zimbabwe-South Africa border, Halter makes a statement about nature of migration. A massive map of the world is revealed to be an infographic—countries whose populations are on the move are cut from weathered plastic bags, while their destinations are shiny and new. An assemblage of Guy Fawkes masks crafted in the styles of different African tribes parodies both trendiness of cultural artifacts in the markets of Cape Town and the empty promises of the Occupy movement, whose most recognizable symbol has been reduced to simple product and profit.

Halter has exhibited work all over the world, including at the South African National Gallery and the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, and has completed residencies in Zurich, Rio de Janeiro, Scotland, and Turin. Find his work at The Armory Show in the [What if The World Gallery](#) booth in Pier 94.

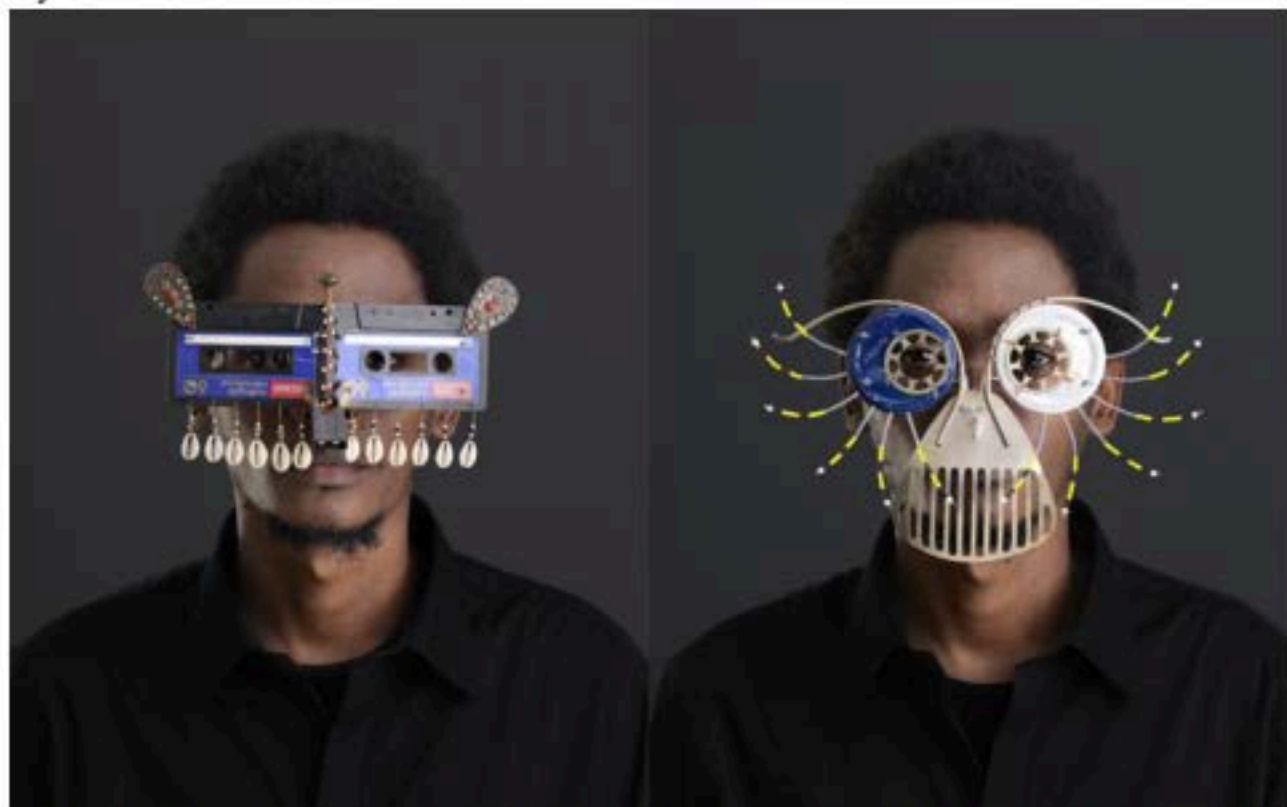
## Wim Botha



*Wim Botha, Busts, 2016. Photo by the author*

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