

1953, Born in Diré, Mali
Lives and works in Bamako, Mali

Abdoulaye Konate's work, rooted in the context of Mali, combines abstraction and figuration, the real and the fantastic, tradition and modernity. Trained in Bamako (1972-1976) and Havana (1978-1985), where he met Wifredo Lam, Konate started with paintings and installations in the early nineties. His first works already carried his long-lasting interest in political and spiritual topics. His imagery conveyed an engaged type of surrealism inherited from Lam, which still fuels his visual world. The life-long quest of the artist is color he endlessly experiments. Within his works, color also operates as a tool for mapping, as each dye comes from a different region of the country and waves its own symbols. Beyond the regional color map, color is also an art of memory, weaving time and space together. In the mid-nineties, Konate started using fabric, one of the most accessible materials in Mali, which enabled him to involve both male textile workers and female dyers. Technically, fabric forces the artist to work on the ground and to experiment with scale, allowing an open dialogue with the wall. The stripes used as a constant motif in his fabrics refer to the traditional costumes of Senufo musicians. Konate's works are also particularly close to the Koredugaw, a secret society based on satire and laughter. Grotesque behaviors such as gluttony and wit are a way for them to purify society. Like them, the artist tries to challenge traditions and social conventions, being sometimes overtly critical in order to ultimately reconcile society. The etymology of Koredugaw also stresses their purification role, as "kore" means grand and "kori" refers to white cotton. The Koredugaw therefore relates to a color-and-material match which is crucial to read Konate's works. In his art, local traditions are therefore often swallowed and reformulated in an abstract-dominated space.