

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Sakhile&Me presents new works by Tagne William Njepe

Enfance volée is the artist's first-ever solo exhibition and deals with issues of forced child labor and education as a basic human right

June 10, 2021

Frankfurt/Main, Germany – Sakhile&Me is pleased to present *Enfance volée* (“Stolen Childhood”), the first solo exhibition of Cameroonian artist Tagne William Njepe. The show runs from June 10 until July 31, 2021 and is centered around the artist's ongoing series of works by the same name, which he started in 2016. The exhibition features nine new works, expanding on Njepe's observations and reflections on childhood and children's hidden or unspoken inner worlds of play, dreams, and imagination.

Drawing from his own childhood growing up in a single-parent household, Njepe's art works through his experience of working at an early age and eventually having to leave school early to help provide for his family. Njepe exorcises his own experiences of forced labor, portraying children doing odd jobs, their everyday reality juxtaposed with a world of dreams filled with cartoon characters, pop art iconography and cheerful peers, either in school or at play. Through these stark contrasts, the artist contemplates a society in which some children are forced to work while others have the chance to go to school and nurture their playful imaginations. Propelled by what he observes around him to create his visual language, the artist invites the viewer into worlds of possibilities, at once containing the harsh aspects of life that children working on the streets contend with while placing them alongside scenes of alternative and perhaps more hopeful circumstances. We catch glimpses of what is possible when children have the freedom to be children.

Throughout his practice, Njepe pays careful attention on the children working outside on the streets, children who are often rendered invisible in the communities they live in. Even on the occasion that others may notice them, these children's dreams and aspirations remain unseen and deferred. The artist employs three primary motifs: in the first, the composition portrays a single child standing facing forward, holding items to sell or holding a tool, with a backdrop of cartoons, pop-art references, and other children playing and learning. In the second motif, we see a side profile of a young person walking through a busy street holding items to sell and rather than the details of their features, the viewer sees the child's entire body filled with cartoons. In the final motif, empty thought bubbles float beside each child - an invitation for the viewer to fill them with their own imagined characters and playful memories of childhood. Njepe continues to develop his visual language, raising his audience's awareness, paying tribute to children and adults who have their own stories of a stolen childhood, and bringing these stories to life through his work so they will not be forgotten.

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In his own words: "I'm inspired by the moment when my art comes to life. Through each stroke, I attempt to gracefully and creatively breathe life into my works that represent my childhood and the lives of others. I try to communicate through series like *Enfance volée* ('Stolen Childhood') a plea to denounce the atrocities and injustices caused to children – as I too was a victim which is why I feel so compelled to fight this fight."

In 2002, Tagne William Njepe's completed his training in Fine Arts at the Atelier Viking in Douala, where he also studied Screen Printing & Calligraphy the following year. The artist's work has been exhibited both locally and internationally, including in Nigeria, France and Switzerland. The artist lives and works in Douala, Cameroon.

567 words, 3.506 characters

About the gallery

Sakhile&Me is a contemporary art gallery based in downtown Frankfurt working with emerging and established international artists, creative entrepreneurs and curators, with a particular focus on Africa and its many diasporas. The gallery's two founders, Sakhile Matlhare and Daniel Hagemeyer, received bachelor's degrees from Hamilton College and master's degrees from the University of Sydney. Matlhare then pursued a doctoral degree at Northwestern University focusing on how contemporary artists work alongside curators, art historians, and other art experts in the gatekeeping process, within and beyond the rubric of contemporary African art. Hagemeyer has worked with his father, Achim Hagemeyer (Kunsthandel Hagemeyer), for the past four years, specializing in German Expressionist and classical modern art.

Opening hours

Tuesday - Friday: 12 pm - 6 pm; Saturday: 10 am - 4 pm; by appointment.

Image Material

Tagne William Njepe. *Enfance Volée* 1993 A 32. 2020. Acrylic on canvas. 180x130cm. **File name:** tagne-william-njepe-enfance-volee-1993-a-32-large.jpg. **Caption:** Tagne William Njepe. *Enfance Volée* 1993 A 32 (2020).

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Tagne William Njepe. *Enfance Volée 1993 C 03 (Le Petit Romeo)*. 2021. Acrylic on canvas. 162x130cm. **File name:** tagne-william-njepe-enfance-volee-1993-c-03-large.jpg. **Caption:** Tagne William Njepe. *Enfance Volée 1993 C 03, Le Petit Romeo* (2021).

Tagne William Njepe. *Enfance Volée 1993 C 04*. 2021. Acrylic on canvas. 141x180cm. **File name:** tagne-william-njepe-enfance-volee-1993-c-04-large.jpg. **Caption:** Tagne William Njepe. *Enfance Volée 1993 C 04* (2021).

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