

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pascal Konan's Solo Exhibition, *Unfinished Symphony*, at The Melrose Gallery 8 February – 28 March 2025

The Melrose Gallery proudly presents *Unfinished Symphony*, a solo exhibition by acclaimed Ivorian artist Pascal Konan, curated by Mpumi Mayisa. From 8 February to 28 March 2025, the exhibition offers a poignant meditation on resilience, transformation, and continuity through Konan's masterful use of diverse materials and fragmented figuration.

Through *Unfinished Symphony*, Konan explores the intricate coexistence of tradition and modernity, reflecting on the evolving narratives of African identity in an increasingly urbanised and globalised world. Drawing from his lived experiences in Abidjan's vibrant yet precarious neighbourhoods, Konan employs a mixed technique, drawing on denim, bleach, acrylic, and Chinese ink as both material and metaphor, offering a layered commentary on urban African life.

Each material and tool he selects brings a unique dynamic to his compositions, reflecting his desire to work with elements from his environment that speak to him and provoke reflection. The interplay of denim and bleach creates a nuanced spectrum of tones, from light to dark. At the same time, acrylic and Chinese ink shape fragmented human forms, evoking the complexities of contemporary African cities and addressing themes of transformation and resilience.

Konan's layered compositions present dancing, fragmented bodies borrowed from contemporary dance and Renaissance iconography - set against tactile, textured backdrops. This interplay of movement and stillness captures the rhythmic choreography of life, where the sacred and the profane coexist. The exhibition emphasises the sacredness of humanity, as Konan's work resonates with spiritual undertones informed by his Christian faith and musical sensibilities. The artist's ability to articulate universal truths through African cosmologies ensures that his work remains deeply rooted yet globally accessible.

Mpumi Mayisa's curatorial approach reflects on the profound existential questions inspired by Konan's meditations on those posed by Gauguin and life itself: *Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?* These inquiries are visually and conceptually grounded in the artist's belief in human life's eternal significance and collective care's transformative potential.

"Pascal Konan's work reveals the poetry of existence in all its precarities and potentials," notes curator Mpumi Mayisa. "Konan's practice reflects a profound understanding of materiality, where each element contributes to the dynamic energy of his compositions. His layered depictions of dancing figures invite us to reflect on the interconnectedness of humanity and the enduring capacity for renewal and hope."

As an artist whose practice transcends geographic boundaries, Konan insists on creating universally resonant works. His deliberate use of symbolic codes and accessible visual



languages bridges the specificity of African urbanity with global audiences, offering both a critique of contemporary social conditions and an invitation to imagine a more harmonious future.

About Pascal Konan

Pascal Konan was born in 1979 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and graduated from the National School of Fine Arts in Abidjan, where he now teaches painting while actively practising his art. Rooted in the daily life of Abidjan's inhabitants, Konan's work exalts the vibrancy of African cities while bearing witness to their precarities. Drawing inspiration from his childhood in the suburbs of Abidjan, Konan seeks to understand the human soul through the rhythms of urban life. His work explores collective energy and human interconnectedness themes, often conveyed through dense, abstract forms that evoke vitality and introspection. Konan's paintings are characterised by a striking palette of reds, yellows, and blacks, with textures and patterns oscillating between chaos and harmony. His mastery of narrative abstraction captures the complexities of contemporary African life, balancing exuberance and fragility in equal measure. *Unfinished Symphony* is a testament to Konan's vision of humanity as sacred and resilient. The exhibition invites viewers to engage with life's perpetual state of becoming, where remnants of the past carry the potential for tomorrow's harmony.

About The Melrose Gallery

The Melrose Gallery is a leading pan African Contemporary gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa. The gallery represents established and emerging artists whose voices speak to issues of significance to the continent of Africa globally. We are passionate about ensuring that the elders who have contributed to African Contemporary Art are recognised and continue to be heard. These inspiring stalwarts provide a stable foundation to an exciting young guard of artists swiftly emerging from the African continent and Diaspora to establish themselves globally. We run a curated programme of exhibitions, participate in respected art fairs, support many of our artists in their participation at Biennales and conceptualise and implement significant non-commercial exhibitions in association with leading museums.

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